3 1761 06890778 1

SHORT SERMONS ON THE PSALMS

RIVINGTONS

London .. .. *Waterloo Place*
Oxford .. .. *High Street*
Cambridge .. .. *Trinity Street*

Relig. Theol.

SHORT

SERMONS ON THE PSALMS

IN THEIR ORDER

PREACHED IN A VILLAGE CHURCH,

BY

W. J. STRACEY, M.A.

RECTOR OF OXHEAD AND VICAR OF BUXTON, NORFOLK
FORMERLY FELLOW OF MAGDALENE COLLEGE
CAMBRIDGE

3 vol.
contents.

PSALMS I—XXV.

RIVINGTONS
London, Oxford, and Cambridge
SAMUEL MILLER & CO., NORWICH
1875 [1880]

1088
8/4/1880

PREFACE

THIS course of Sermons on the Psalms was begun more than ten years ago. I have been led to publish, this first volume at least, chiefly because, though commentaries on the Psalms abound, I have not been able to learn that a single course of *sermons* on the Psalms *in their order* is extant. Yet there is no part of holy Scripture more read and used, or more requiring the explanation of words and references, and especially its application to us as Christians, and for the poor in the simplest language.

I have endeavoured in each psalm—

1. To select carefully the text; for the poor and children will often take home, remember, and think of the text, when they remember not a word of what follows.

2. To point out some application or reference in each psalm to Christ or His Church, and so to ourselves, and the Christians of all times.

3. To explain any *special* circumstance or reference, clear or supposed. And in doing this I can hardly say now when or where I may have derived help, from Bishop Horne or others, except where it is named.

Perhaps this course of sermons may be allowed to suggest to some of my brother clergy, especially to those younger than myself, the usefulness both to ourselves and to our people of having some *course of sermons always* in hand; not to be followed as an *invariable* rule, but whenever there is nothing in the day, or the season, or of parochial interest for us to dwell upon; *e.g.* the miracles and parables of our Lord in their order, or the sermon on the mount, or some book, such as Ecclesiastes, or the Revelation, or the Acts of the Apostles, or the lives of men and women as they appear in holy Scripture, are some of many such subjects which may be taken in hand.

Should I learn by any means that this volume proves acceptable to the public, I shall hope to follow it up with another volume during the present year, and two, if God permit, in next year, taking in the average twenty-five psalms in each volume.

After thirty years of ministerial life, the greater part of which has all been passed in one place, I earnestly

hope I may be allowed by doing this to say some word to do good, to sow some one seed of good, beyond the limits of a small country parish. The Church reminds us that God is "wont to give more than either we desire or deserve;" and the Psalmist teaches us the same when he says, "He asked life of thee, and thou gavest him a long life, even for ever and ever."

BUXTON VICARAGE, NORWICH,
April 12th, 1875.

CONTENTS

SERMON I.

Page

"*But the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: and the way of the ungodly shall perish.*"—PSALM i. 6 1

SERMON II.

"*Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession.*"—PSALM ii. 7, 8 10

SERMON III.

"*I laid me down and slept, and rose up again; for the Lord sustained me.*"—PSALM iii. 5 19

SERMON IV.

"*Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.*"—PSALM iv. 4. 27

SERMON V.

"*For Thou, Lord, wilt give Thy blessing unto the righteous; and with Thy favourable kindness wilt Thou defend him as with a shield.*"—PSALM v. 12 36

SERMON VI.

"*For in death there is no remembrance of Thee: in the grave who shall give Thee thanks?*"—PSALM vi. 5 44

SERMON VII.

"*For the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.*"—PSALM vii. 9 52

SERMON VIII.

Page

"*O Lord our Governor, how excellent is Thy Name in all the world! Thou that hast set Thy glory above the heavens. . . . . What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?*"—PSALM viii. 1-4 . . . 60

SERMON IX.

"*The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know Thy Name will put their trust in Thee: for Thou, Lord, hast never failed them that seek Thee.*"—PSALM ix. 9, 10 68

SERMON X.

"*The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God.*"—PSALM ix. 17 75

SERMON XI.

"*He hath said in his heart, Tush, God hath forgotten: He hideth away His face, and He will never see it.*"—PSALM x. 11 . 83

SERMON XII.

"*In the Lord put I my trust: how then say ye to my soul, that she should flee as a bird unto the hill?*"—PSALM xi. 1 . . 91

SERMON XIII.

"*Help me, Lord, for there is not one godly man left: for the faithful are minished from among the children of men. They talk of vanity every one with his neighbour: they do but flatter with their lips, and dissemble in their double heart. But the Lord shall root out all deceitful lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things.*"—PSALM xii. 1-3 99

SERMON XIV.

"*I will sing of the Lord, because He hath dealt so lovingly with me.*"—PSALM xiii. 6 107

SERMON XV.

"*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*"—PSALM xiv. 1 113

SERMON XVI.

Page

"*Lord, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle? or who shall rest upon Thy holy hill? Even he that leadeth an uncorrupt life, and doeth the thing that is right, and speaketh the truth from his heart. He that hath used no deceit in his tongue, nor done evil to his neighbour, and hath not slandered his neighbour. He that setteth not by himself, but is lowly in his own eyes, and maketh much of them that fear the Lord.*"—PSALM xv. 1-4 . 121

SERMON XVII.

"*Wherefore My heart was glad, and My glory rejoiced: My flesh also shall rest in hope. For why? Thou shalt not leave My soul in hell; neither shalt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou shalt shew Me the path of life: in Thy presence is the fulness of joy; but at Thy right hand there is pleasure for evermore.*"—PSALM xvi. 10-12 . . . 127

SERMON XVIII.

"*O hold Thou up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not. . . . . Keep me as the apple of an eye, hide me under the shadow of Thy wings.*"—PSALM xvii. 5, 8 . . . 135

SERMON XIX.

"*The Lord my God shall make my darkness to be light.*"—PSALM xviii. 28 144

SERMON XX.

"*In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun.*"—PSALM xix. 5 . 153

SERMON XXI.

"*The law of the Lord is an undefiled law, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, and giveth wisdom unto the simple.*"—PSALM xix. 7-11 162

SERMON XXII.

"*Who can tell how oft he offendeth? O cleanse Thou me from my secret faults.*"—PSALM xix. 12-15 170

SERMON XXIII.

"*Some put their trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the Name of the Lord our God.*"—PSALM xx. 7 . 180

Page

SERMON XXIV.

"*He asked life of Thee, and thou gavest him a long life, even for ever and ever.*"—PSALM xxi. 4 188

SERMON XXV. (FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.)

"*My God, my God, look upon me; why hast Thou forsaken me?*"—PSALM xxii. 1 197

SERMON XXVI. (SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.)

"*My God, my God, look upon me; why hast Thou forsaken me, and art so far from my health, and from the words of my complaint?*"—PSALM xxii. 1 206

SERMON XXVII. (THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.)

"*But as for me, I am a worm, and no man; a very scorn of men, and the outcast of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out their lips, and shake their heads, saying, He trusted in God that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, if He will have Him.*"—PSALM xxii. 6-8 . . 216

SERMON XXVIII. (FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.)

"*They pierced My hands and My feet.*"—PSALM xxii. 17 . . 226

SERMON XXIX. (FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT.)

"*They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture.*"—PSALM xxii. 18 235

SERMON XXX. (EASTER DAY.)

"*All they that go down into the dust shall kneel before Him: and no man hath quickened his own soul.*"—PSALM xxii. 30 . 245

SERMON XXXI.

"*The Lord is my Shepherd; therefore can I lack nothing.*"—PSALM xxiii. 1, 4, 6 254

SERMON XXXII. (ASCENSION DAY.)

"*Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.*"—PSALM xxiv. 7 262

SERMON XXXIII.

"*O remember not the sins and offences of my youth: but according to Thy mercy think Thou upon me, O Lord, for Thy goodness.*"—PSALM xxv. 6 270

SERMON I.

"But the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: and the way of the ungodly shall perish."—PSALM i. 6.

THE book of Psalms is sometimes called the prayer-book of the saints. It has been in daily use among God's people for now 3,000 years. And there are few, if any, parts of Scripture which have had *more* effect upon men's hearts and lives than these holy songs of prayer and praise. Possibly many of us repeat their words day by day, and week by week, year after year, without much thought of their meaning; or, when it is otherwise, there are many passages which require explanation before we can rightly understand them and what they refer to. I trust, therefore, that it may not be unprofitable if by degrees, my brethren, I should go through the whole book of Psalms with you in order, as now in to-day's morning service I take this first psalm. Let us ask for God's blessing upon such a course, and He will assuredly grant it to us.

We commonly call the whole book "The Psalms of David;" partly because the greater part of them were

written by him; partly because they refer throughout very especially to Christ the true Son of David; and partly because the spirit which was in David runs through each of them. In old time the book was divided into five parts, answering to the five books of Moses. The first part contained the first forty-one psalms; the second ended at Psalm lxxii. And these two parts are more especially the psalms of David; for Psalm lxxii. ends thus: "And blessed be His glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with His glory; Amen, and Amen. The words of David the son of Jesse are ended." The next three parts are ascribed to various authors, such as Moses, Ezra, Jeremiah, and Samuel, for instance. But whoever they were written by, under the teaching of God's Holy Spirit they are all alike inspired, and so have ever been received into the canonical books of holy Scripture. This first psalm, which we will very shortly consider to-day, comprises a contrast between the righteous and the wicked. It forms a sort of introduction or key to all the rest which follow, just as the last verse of the last psalm is a summing up of all that have gone before when it says: "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord." Its first word pronounces a blessing: "Blessed is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, and hath not sat in the seat of the scornful." Thus it is with a blessing that all God's words and dealings with us begin and end. No sooner was man

created than we are told in the next verse, "And God *blessed* them." When our Lord began His public preaching in Judæa the first words of His sermon are the eight beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." And when at the close of all He was about to leave the twelve to found and to guide His Church on earth, "He lifted up His hands, and blessed them." Our life on earth through Christ is summed up in this: "We are hereunto called that we should inherit a blessing." And that will finally be bestowed when Christ shall say to His own people after the judgment of the last day: "Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world." But all this present and future blessing promised us by God depends upon this, that "we delight in the law of the Lord, and practise it day and night." We all know how God's

primeval blessing upon Adam was soon turned into a curse. Sin and death entered into the world, and even the ground on which they trod was cursed for their sin, which had received God's first and abundant blessing. So it is still with all of us, if we, having been once rescued, restored, and forgiven through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, again fall away. And this first verse describes the gentle and gradual way in which a man falls away from God. He first is led to walk in the counsel of the ungodly, then to place himself in the sure way of new temptation, till at last he makes a scoff at God and His laws.

In all of us the heart directs and rules the man. Whatever we set our hearts upon we follow after and aim at. As the wise man says: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." And it is on this account that God requires the first and chief place in all our affections to be given to Him. We must love the Lord our God with *all* our heart, *all* our soul, *all* our mind, and *all* our strength. This is the first and great commandment. For whatever a man sets his heart upon, *that* becomes the object for which he daily lives and works and thinks. It matters not what it be. It may be our earthly relationships—wife and children, parents or brethren; or it may be earthly riches, lands and houses, which never satisfy; or worldly honour; or one or other of a thousand other objects in life. But *whatever* it is that the heart

is set upon, that becomes the real object in life for which we live and plan. Now God lays hold of this natural tendency in us, and claims our affections supremely for Himself. He promises, if we do this, to give us all else that is good and best and necessary for us; but without it nothing in the end can either satisfy or please. "Seek first," He says (that is, before and above all other things), "the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all other things shall be added unto you." I need not say that this is the very reverse of the common ways of life amongst us. Too many of us give up God's ways and God's service for any thing else. Some openly pursue the world altogether, and try entirely to dismiss the thought of God from their hearts; and multitudes of others, who do not do this openly, really and in truth do it—almost, it may be, unknown to themselves. We balance the wishes of those about us against the commands of God, and follow *them.* A hot day, or a cold day—any and every trifling event—interferes with and interrupts our *perfect* service of Christ. Or we put off, and again put off, our striving to attain to greater perfection of life and character till some more convenient season. Young persons think they will enjoy life, as they say, while they are young, and may banish God from their thoughts and hearts till some of their best years on earth are past. Older persons think when they are old, that then they will serve God; but this period never draws nearer. It

is as far off this year as it was last year; and it will be so again and again, unless God should interpose some particular providence, as sometimes He does, to win them to Himself. Oh, my brethren, let not Satan whisper into your ears and hearts that it is easy to attain eternal life! Christ the Lord, who alone knew the hearts of all men, and is Himself the Way and the Truth and the *Life*, says to all of us, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for broad is the way of destruction, and many walk along it; narrow is the way of life, and few there be that find it." I wish we could all learn this: how easy it is to perish, how hard it is to be saved. And all issues out of this—the desire of the heart. They who shall attain to God's kingdom have *here on earth* their "delight in the law of the Lord; and in His law they will exercise themselves day and night." "As for the ungodly, it is not so with them: but they are like the chaff which the wind scattereth away from the face of the earth." The one "bringeth forth his fruit in due season;" the other "shall not be able to stand in the judgment." We wonder sometimes at the conduct of this or that man—how he can find any pleasure in many things which he does. Why does he go to church whenever he can? Why does he love God's house? Why does he kneel down most reverently, and seem to take a delight in all acts of public worship? Why does he come with unfailing regularity to the Lord's holy table? The

answer is here given us to all such questionings: "His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law will he exercise himself day and night."

And mark the further blessing which is promised here: "He shall be like a tree planted by the water side, that will bring forth his fruit in due season; his leaf also shall not wither; and look, whatsoever he doeth it shall prosper." We, my brethren, if we live and work for Christ, look not for any earthly reward or success. We are contented to wait for that, in the assurance and hope of receiving at last "the end of our conversation, even the salvation of our souls." We know not how our treasure grows above; but we know if our hearts be there, "our labour is not in vain in the Lord." More surely than the tree produces its leaves and its fruit in due season after long waiting, shall we, though we wait long for our eternal reward, yet in the end have it. It *will* come; it will *not* tarry for ever. *Our* hope begins to be fulfilled when, and only when, all else in this world is past and gone. We have but to wait and to work, and the harvest is *sure* to us. Nothing fails that is sown unto God. He is a hard and austere master only to them who bury their talent in the earth, and live for *it;* but to them who trade with it for His honour, their five talents shall gain five cities; their two talents shall gain for them two cities. And above and beyond all that, they "enter into the joy of their Lord." Oh that we all had but the faith thus to live

and work, day by day to live unto God, and to work on in order to win the heavenly reward! It is our own blindness and our own fault if we do not. For God "makes all things work together for good to them that love Him." We know how the snows and frosts of winter, followed by the showers and dews of spring, and the bright suns of summer, how all these make the seed to produce its autumn harvest—"some thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, some an hundredfold." So with us. Be in earnest, by brethren; but be patient. Work for God, and yet wait. Nothing lasts which is soon done, and soon perfected. What is best takes much time and care to bring it to maturity. Let us not desire a different rule than this for ourselves in the highest and best matters of all—the preparation of our hearts for the life beyond the grave. God knows our ways and our works. Each day is registered in heaven our daily life, as we lead it; each day adds one line or one page more to our book of life or of death. Even our secret thoughts are there found traced in unfading ink against the final revelation of all things, and by angel hands, which never tire. "The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish." They who live on earth for heaven shall inherit heaven; they who centre all their hearts and care in and for earth, shall reap their own perishing rewards when earth shall all pass away. They have sown unto the wind, and they will reap the whirlwind. "Sin, when it

is finished, bringeth forth death"—only death—a death which lives in its own perpetual continuance. Let us sum up all in our Lord's own words: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where rust and moth doth corrupt; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." "His leaf shall not wither; and look, whatsoever he doeth, it shall prosper."

SERMON II.

"*Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance: and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.*"—PSALM ii. 7, 8.

THERE are two things certain respecting this second psalm: first, that it was written by David; and secondly, that it refers in a very especial manner to Christ our Lord. It is quoted again and again in the New Testament as belonging to our Saviour. Thus in Acts iv. we read, when Peter and John returned from the presence of the council, they "reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and

the people of Israel, were gathered together." Here we have the exact words of this Psalm, with the declaration that it was written by David, and in reference to Christ our Saviour. In Acts xiii. we have S. Paul declaring that these words, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee," specially refer to the Lord's resurrection. Again, in Hebrews i., he quotes them in proof of the superiority of Christ to the angels; and in chapter v. he refers them to the Lord's priesthood. Also we must not forget that they were the very words spoken in the clouds at our Lord's baptism by S. John, and again at His transfiguration.

This is a most remarkable testimony to the inspiration of this psalm; for thus we find it used at our Lord's baptism; at His transfiguration; by the apostles after their first appearance before the council; by S. Paul in proof of the Lord's resurrection, afterwards in proof of His superiority to the angels, and lastly in proof of His eternal priesthood. Its first words relate to the Saviour's passion: "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers took counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed." The next part refers to the Lord's triumph over all His enemies by His resurrection from the dead. The third part refers to His spiritual kingdom as embracing all heathen nations, and all the most distant lands. And the last verse is an invitation to all people to serve Him, as they who refuse to do so shall perish; but they who

do serve Him shall be blessed for ever through Him.

The first part is of course an historical fact, one which we all know and understand. Our Lord's name, Messiah or Christ, means "The Anointed;" and we know how all the powers of this world rose up to condemn and cast Him out. On the morning of the crucifixion alone He appeared before the high priest and council; then before Pilate, the Roman governor; and then was sent by him to Herod, and by him back to Pilate. Thus priests and governor and king all alike condemned him—the first with the earnest desire of destroying Him. Pilate, against his own will and conscience and conviction, passed sentence of death upon Him at the bidding of the mob; and Herod with his men of war derided the silent sufferer. But God's ways are not as our ways. What man did for the destruction of the new religion, was the ordained way by which it should be for ever established in the hearts of men. "He that dwelleth in heaven laughed them to scorn; the Lord had them in derision." The sorrows of that Friday morning soon gave way to the joys of Easter Sunday. The crucified became the first-begotten from the dead, "the firstfruits of them that slept." It was fulfilled: "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." As He was the first *man* who had fulfilled God's will perfectly in the flesh, so was He the first man to rise again from the dead, the proof and

token of our own assured resurrection at the last day. Thus He ascended up to heaven in the truth of our human nature, made deathless, and full of glory, the eternal Son with an eternal manhood, to which our own bodies shall be made like at His next appearing, as S. John says: "Brethren, *now* are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." And whence, my brethren, shall they come who shall thus be made like unto the Lord? Hear what this psalm says: "Desire of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession." His Church is to be truly catholic, or universal; it is to teach all truth; it is to endure to all time; and it is to embrace all nations. "The gospel is to be preached in *all* the world." None are too far off, or too low, or too high, too old, or too young; but all men everywhere are invited to "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." It is the Father's gift to us at the Saviour's prayer. This is one of those deep mysteries of our faith which we cannot explain, that the Son, to whom all power is given in heaven and in earth, yet prays the Father, intercedes for us to be given to Him, desires the heathen for His inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for His possession.

It is very remarkable in connection with this verse

to compare our Lord's solemn prayer which occupies John xvii. In it the Saviour mentions, seven or eight times at least, His disciples as "those whom thou hast given me," or "as many as thou gavest me;" or thus, "Thou gavest them me." But He looked even then, we are sure, beyond the small company which surrounded Him at the moment. He thinks also of the heathen who should be His inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth which should become His possession; for He said then: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word." And then, as soon as the resurrection is past, and He is about to ascend up to the Father, He bids them: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to *every* creature;" or, as S. Matthew states it, "Make disciples of *all* nations, baptizing them into the name of the Holy Trinity."

It is this command, this prayer, and this desire on the Saviour's part which makes missionary work an *essential part of every Christian's love and duty.* As the Saviour "desires the heathen for His inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for His possession," so it belongs to us each to do our part in some way in order to insure the fulfilment of His desire. He might, had He pleased, have done this by Himself alone. We can well suppose that by some great sight, or some terrible proof of His power, He might once for all have turned the hearts of all men unto Himself, as He

converted Saul by miracle. But though Christ our Saviour has chosen to make us men the instruments of other men's salvation, the truths which He left us are not conveyed to distant lands by a voice in the clouds, or by the message of an angel; but one man or one nation is made the instrument whereby others are brought into the faith and Church of Christ. And it is one of the happiest signs of the days we live in that the Church of Christ is extending her borders in all lands, making the heathen to become Christ's inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth His possession. We should each *pray* for this, and with our alms and gifts help on the work.

When the Saviour was about to send forth the twelve apostles on their first missionary journey, He said, "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth labourers into His harvest." And when some time later on He sent forth other seventy, by two and two, to carry far and wide His call, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," He addressed to them, it seems, the *very same* words as at first to the twelve apostles. By this He has pointed out to us surely both His desire that all men should be saved, and also *how* we may each help on His work, and best do our part in it. We must continually pray, with earnestness and faith, "Thy kingdom come;" "Lord, send forth labourers

into thy harvest." Our own growth in grace depends very much upon our desire and efforts to spread Christ's kingdom to others. He who has no care for missions can have little care for his own spiritual state. The one affects infallibly the other. If we don't reach out to desire that others may be partakers of those gifts of grace and salvation which we possess, and that future glory for which we wait and hope; if we do not set this forward by earnest prayer, and by our offerings and influence, we may be quite sure that our own hearts are in a dead and cold state towards God—that we have as yet little learnt the value of the gifts bestowed upon us, or the glories at God's right hand which are in store for them that love Him. Therefore, my brethren, let us mark this as a rule. If we love Christ, the proof lies not only in the obedience of our lives to His gospel, but in the desire we feel and the efforts we make, by prayer and otherwise, to bring others into a like obedience and faith with us. This is one of the surest and best fruits of faith. As the Saviour desires the heathen for His inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for His possession, let us give our prayers and desires, and efforts and alms, to this work, saying, "Thy kingdom come: thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Lord, send forth labourers into thine harvest."

And there is yet one more Christian truth brought before us prominently in this psalm where it says:

"Be wise now therefore, O ye rulers: be learned, ye that are judges of the earth. Serve the Lord in fear: and rejoice unto Him with reverence. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and so ye perish from the right way. . . . Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." Here they who have despised Him are exhorted to turn unto Him as their only hope of salvation. Thus the gospel is ever published with its offers and promises of mercy. He whom men thus despised, as the psalm says, is become the head of all power and honour. Man's proud heart must stoop to kiss the Son; and when they do so His love flows forth towards us far fuller than we dare hope or expect. Look at those two thieves upon their cross, "on either side one, and Jesus in the midst." At first, as it seems, *both* join in reviling Him; but soon one of them sees something of the Saviour's divine nature and character, and so prays, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." And the answer is immediate and full: "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise"—the blessed place where God's people rest until the last day. Strange it is that the gracious offers of salvation should be continually rejected by men, as in the first days of man's redemption. But sin still clings to human nature, and binds it with a cord not quickly broken. On its first publication, the world rose up in violent persecution of the faith, and sought to destroy all who made Christ's laws their guide and rule of life.

Now in our day men turn, as it were, a deaf ear to all its calls and invitations. They don't persecute the church so much as they affect to despise it. It is equally the sin of unbelief, only differently manifested. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever;" and so is every thing which belongs to or relates to Him in the world. The same call goes forth now as even at first: "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and so ye perish from the right way. . . . Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." Yea, blessed *here* in the testimony of a good conscience and of a holy life; *there*, in the rewards of His heavenly kingdom; blessed *now* in sowing the seeds which *hereafter* shall be a harvest unto eternal life in the kingdom of the resurrection, unto which may God bring *us* through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON III.

"I laid me down and slept, and rose up again; for the Lord sustained me."—PSALM iii. 5.

THIS psalm is headed in our Bible version as composed by David when he fled from Jerusalem on the insurrection raised by his own son Absalom. The account of this sad passage in the king's life is related at some length in the second book of Samuel. We read in chap. xv., "All the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over: the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over, toward the way of the wilderness." Then it was that the king exclaimed, "Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me. Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God." But then comes the consolation of true faith, which is far more proved and confirmed in us by sufferings and adversities than in the days of prosperity and plenty. The psalmist reasons with himself thus: "Though they say and do all this against me, yet thou, O Lord, art my defender, my worship, and the lifter up of my head. I cried unto the Lord with my

voice, and He heard me out of His holy hill. Though in the midst of trouble, with many enemies and few friends—yea, even my own son risen up against me, still I laid me down and slept, and rose up again; for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousand of people, which have set themselves against me round about. Arise, O Lord; and save me, O my God. Salvation be ascribed unto the Lord: thy blessing be upon thy people." This is the way in which David bore that sorest trial of all in his eventful life. For what could be a greater affliction to him in his old age than to have his own son rise up against him, and to find the chief part of the people go after him in his rebellion, so that the king had to leave Jerusalem and flee away? Yet we see how entirely he trusted in God to deliver him, and the history tells us how soon his prayer was answered. Absalom was slain, and all who followed him were dispersed; and then all Israel turned back again after David.

But this would be a poor interpretation of these words if that were all. When David is speaking as he does in this psalm, he speaks not only of his own affliction and preservation, but of David's far greater Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, in His affliction. As David passed over in sorrow this brook Kidron, so did Christ our Saviour cross the very same little stream the night before He suffered. (See S. John xviii. 1.) The plot was already in execution through the treachery of one of

the twelve. And all the people shouted as with one voice, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." The Saviour stood alone in His hour of peril. Most true was it of Him: "Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me. Many there be that say of my soul, There is no help for him in God." Yea, we read in the gospel how the crowd around the cross exclaimed, "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him." "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." But as David in a few days' time returned in triumph to Jerusalem, so with David's greater Son, a far greater triumph awaited Him within three days. This verse, my text, is a true description of the cross and resurrection of our Lord: "I laid me down and slept, and rose up again; for the Lord sustained me." The Lord laid down His life of His own will. "He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost." As He had said before: "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of mine own self. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." And thus it was "He fell asleep" in death. The centurion who was standing by was so astonished at the Lord's manner of giving up His life that he exclaimed, "Truly this man was the Son of God." The cross was His bed, on which He stretched Himself for our sake. He slept upon it the deep, calm sleep of the departed—in peace with God, into whose hands He commended His human soul—in peace with man, for the first sentence of the

Lord from the cross was, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

But death with Him, as with all who are His, was turned into sleep. Its powerful chain was then broken once and for ever. From that moment it was true, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" On the third day He rose again, "like a giant refreshed with wine," like the sun going forth in the fresh glory of the early summer morning. He had perfectly undergone death, as we all do in turn; it is the penalty upon Adam's sin in us. In Him, who was sinless, it was for our sakes. He died unto sin once; but He liveth for ever unto God for us. Even His human flesh did not see corruption; it rose triumphant over death before that the women arrived with the sweet spices with which to embalm the sacred body.

From that moment death lost its supreme power over men. We know that as He our Head could not be holden of it, so we, if we are His, shall rise again, like Him, to receive no more a corruptible body, but an incorruptible. The same change which passed on Him will be continued in us—"we shall be like Him." "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." No eye hath seen, nor heart conceived, the full glories of our coming resurrection. We know that the disciples could not even look upon the Saviour when for that little while He was transfigured before their eyes on the holy mount.

All that glory, which He has of His own, will He share with us, whom He deigns to call His friends and brethren. Just as He laid down and slept, and rose up again—"for the Lord sustained Him"—so will it be with us.

God knows each grain of sand which has formed our human body. It is instinct with life. It only waits the one long-expected word and sign, and our churchyard will be full of life; each turf in it will heave with life which cannot be compressed. "All who are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth." Each lies now in his narrow bed; but the morning of the resurrection will soon come, the glorious morning when the sons of God shall go forth, and enter into the joy of their Lord. It is the Lord that now sustains us, and will then call us forth. Where His Spirit dwells, there dwells a life which is not touched by any power or principles of earth. It is the Spirit's dwelling in us which gifts us with every power over sin, and will raise us up at the last day. "I laid me down and slept, and rose up again; for the Lord sustained me." He sustains us here, that we may share in His resurrection hereafter. As He says in the gospel of S. John: "I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. . . . Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh

my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." It is this spiritual presence of Christ in us which will make us in our resurrection "like unto Him." It is this assurance of faith in Him which takes away our bitter sorrow as one by one we lay those we love in their last resting-place. Earth hides them from our eyes; but they are all known unto God. The living spirit rests in his own appointed place, the paradise of God; and of the body we may say, "My flesh also shall rest in hope." For why? "Thou shalt not leave my soul in hell;" *i.e.* the grave. It will come forth to live for ever, if sustained on earth in union with the Lord our Saviour, and thus kept the dwelling-place of the Holy Spirit. Thus it is that this verse of my text refers first to David, then to Christ in His passion and resurrection, and so from Him to us and our resurrection.

But there is one way more in which these words may be said to touch us. It is a lower and less important one; that is, in our daily taking rest to recruit our strength, and rising up in the morning prepared for all the duties and labours of the new day, preserved through the night, and raised up, we know not how, in the morning. Perhaps most of us think little of the mystery of sleep—what it is, or what comes of the busy mind which all day long is plotting and active, and working with untiring energy. We pass many hours at a time, each day we live, perfectly

deprived of all consciousness, but actually renewed in power by that positive loss of all power. Our nightly sleep is and ought to be a good reminder of the long night's rest which remains for all but the last generation of man before the resurrection. And if it is so, my brethren, no less should our awakening out of sleep often remind us of that blessed change of which I have been speaking, when we shall awake to the eternal day, the day which has no shadows, the day which has no night nor darkness at all. "I laid me down and slept, and rose up again; for the Lord sustained me." As this was true of Christ, so will it be true of us; but also so is it true of us in our daily sleeping and awakening. "The Lord sustained me;" in that is the true secret of all such power and change. Our natural life, we all well know, hangs upon the will of the Almighty. What we have is His gift; our continuance is at His pleasure. "When He taketh away our breath we die, and are turned again to the earth."

But higher and better than our natural life is that spiritual life kindled in the regenerated soul of each of us. It is born of the Spirit, it is sustained of the Spirit, and depends upon the Spirit's abiding presence within us. Over this life we have, every day we live, a continual influence. We may gain for ourselves more and more abundantly of His endless power and perfections; or we may resist His influence, and quench

His power and life in us, and finally drive Him from His throne and dwelling-place. Let us take heed, my brethren, that the Lord does sustain us. Let us give ourselves to Him day by day; let us live unto Him. The more we love Him, the less will the best that this world has to offer occupy our hearts and care. Each day we have an account to make up—new sins to confess and ask pardon for, new mercies unconsciously bestowed and unconsciously received, new gifts of grace which we need to ask, and by our asking receive. Let us try to keep God's commandments even to perfection; let us pray for grace to do so, and to use that grace when it is given us. Day by day let us thus lie down and sleep, and rise up again, sustained by the Spirit of the Lord, ruled by the Spirit of the Lord, led of the Spirit. If so, then we may look forward with blessed confidence to the still longer sleep, and its last and only awakening, when the morning of the resurrection-day shall dawn, when "salvation cometh of the Lord, and His blessing shall be upon all His people."

SERMON IV.

"Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still."—PSALM iv. 4.

THIS psalm, like the one before it and after it, is supposed to have been composed by David at the period of his flight from Absalom—this psalm probably later than the last, and when his restoration was accomplished, or at least near at hand; for whereas the third psalm begins thus: "Lord, how are they increased that trouble me!" this begins in its first verse thus: "Thou hast set me at liberty when I was in trouble." The whole psalm seems to set before us the acceptableness of prayer in God's sight, where the life corresponds with the devout expressions of the heart and lips. The poor blind man to whom our Lord restored the gift of sight seems to express very much the same idea as this psalm conveys, when he replied to the cavils of the Jews thus: "Now we know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, *and doeth His will,* him He heareth;" for here, as in this psalm, is combined the worship of God with the doing His will. Our Lord expressed the very same truth when

He said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that DOETH the will of my Father which is in heaven." Our prayers must be the true expression of our heart and life; for if these contradict our prayers, our prayers will not be accepted before God, except it be to our condemnation. So it was said to Cornelius: "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." And so S. James declares: "The effectual fervent prayer of a *righteous* man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." All these passages may well exemplify the direction of this psalm; viz., it sets forth the power which prayer has with God when the life is altogether holy and pleasing in His sight. Good works and good prayers must go together; the one helps the other; and as good prayers will ever lead on to good works and holy living, so without these last our prayers will have little power with God. Of course, my brethren, there are to many persons great difficulties in doing as they would wish in this respect. In the many crowded homes that there are in most parishes, some may think themselves altogether excused from making any effort to pray because of the interruptions of their home. But not so. They who cannot

find a time and place for their prayers at home must, if they would desire to grow in God's grace, and fit themselves for heaven, they must find and make a time and place for their prayers elsewhere. Now if you have no time and place in your own homes where you can be quiet and by yourself, that time and opportunity you may always have in God's house, when it is open for service. God says of His earthly temples: "Mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people." It is not necessary to limit the use of a church like this to acts of public worship; it is a place for *private* prayer as well as public, and those who cannot find quiet and solitude at home ought the more gladly to come here for their *private* devotions, as well as to join together in acts of public worship. There are very many of you, my brethren, who do not come, but who might come to our week-day prayers, if only you had the desire and heart to do so. I am quite sorry to think and to see how few avail themselves of these opportunities. I think many of you might easily arrange your home-work and duties so as to come together for this short act of public worship. In this respect, as in every other, our Lord's own example is full of instruction for us. You may say that you have a *crowded* home, and cannot there say your prayers with any comfort to yourselves, and so you omit them altogether; but remember, *He* had no home. It is His own description of His own life, that "the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air

have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." But what did He do? Did He give up His prayers, and say He had no place to pray in? And as for crowds, who was ever so pressed upon by multitudes as He? By night and by day, in the city and in the wilderness alike, they pressed upon Him to hear the word of God; the people thronged Him, they followed Him on foot out of all the cities and country around. The Lord and His apostles had no time so much as to eat! Besides this, we might well suppose that prayer would be unnecessary for *Him*. We might well have supposed that He who was the very true and eternal God, the Creator who made us in the beginning—"for without Him was not anything made that was made"—that He, of all men, might have done without prayer on earth. But not so. *You* may have a crowded home; but the Saviour had no settled home at all! You may have your own family about you; He had crowds and multitudes pressing around Him at all times, by night and by day! We have all intense *need* of prayer; it is as necessary to our spiritual condition as our daily food is necessary for our bodies. But He, though man, was God, with all things at His command. As he says at last, by one prayer He could have brought twelve legions of angels to His rescue; but how then would the Scriptures have been fulfilled?

Of His prayers, both as to time and place, we have most especial mention. When He was at Jerusalem

He made use of the garden of Gethsemane for this purpose; for we are expressly told that "Jesus oft-times resorted thither with His disciples," so that Judas knew where to find Him, though it was night. But besides this, I would have you especially attend to the intimations which are left us respecting our Lord's prayers both as to their time and place. S. Mark (i. 35) says, "And in the morning, rising up a *great while before day*, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." S. Matthew (xiv. 23) says, "When He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain *apart* to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone." S. Luke speaks of the Lord's prayers again and again. In one place (v. 16) thus: "And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness, and prayed." Again (vi. 12): "And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." And again (ix. 28): "And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain *to pray*. And *as He prayed*, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistering." Let us pause for a moment upon the picture which is thus given us of our Lord's habit of prayer. The time He took, or rather *made*, out of His busy life was "before daybreak," or it is "all night long;" and the place, it was in "solitary places," or "on the mountain,"

or "in the wilderness," or the garden of Gethsemane ofttimes. Nothing teaches us, my brethren, the necessity of prayer so strongly as our Lord's own example in this respect. He had no sins of His own, as we have, to pray for, that they might be forgiven. He had no grace to seek; for He had received of the Spirit without measure. Yet He, above all other saints whose lives are recorded in the Bible, spent much time during His all-busy life in His prayers. Surely this teaches us that the most holy people are ever the most full of prayers. They *pray* most, because they are most holy; and they are most *holy*, because they pray most. The one answers to the other. And it may further be remarked that our Lord's prayers are always especially mentioned before any one of the greater events in His *life*. It is not only in Gethsemane, in the night before He suffered, that He is on His knees, or fallen down upon the ground in His agony of supplication, when Judas entered the garden with his band of men: but *at His baptism*, S. Luke says, "Jesus also being baptized, and *praying*, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him." Again, *before* He called the twelve who were to be His own daily companions, and afterwards the first founders of His Church, we find that He spent the whole night in prayer to God. Then, again, it was during His prayers that His glorious transfiguration took place, when "His raiment was white and glister-

ing, and His face shone as the sun." From all this, my brethren, we learn that a life of habitual prayer is a *life* of the highest perfection, and that our prayers will be more or less perfect in proportion as our state of holiness is more or less advanced. The most perfect example of prayer is that of Him who was *perfect in holiness.*

I think, then, nothing could be said to recommend what this verse of my text expresses so well as these facts recorded of the Saviour's own most holy life. In this, as in every other way, *that* is presented to us as the mark for us all to aim at, as the model for us to copy—"Stand in awe, and sin; commune with thine own heart, and in your chamber, and be still." Is this what each of us does, or tries to do? Somehow or other we must make both time and place for this. We have seen how our Lord did so. He rose up before the world was stirring, or spent the whole night alone upon the mountain, or departed into the wilderness, and at Jerusalem made the garden of Gethsemane His house of prayer. Let none of us say, then, with that example before our eyes, that we have *no* time or no place in which to say our prayers; but as a ready reply to any feeling of the kind in any heart, let me advise you to find some solitary place, as He did, or to make more use than you do now—all the use that you can—of this holy place, and any like it. This is God's house, set apart for prayer and the offices of religion, and for

nothing else. You have not, as your Saviour had, to seek a wilderness, or a mountain-top, before you can pray to your Father quietly and undisturbed. If your homes are crowded, in the Church we may generally say, "And yet there is room." If your homes are noisy, here are no sounds to disturb a devotional spirit, but everything to help and sustain it. Oh that God would thus revive His work amongst us! that He would awaken our hearts to the great necessity of prayer, and would teach us to love the courts of His house, and this place wherein His honour dwelleth! All graces of the Spirit are measured within us and to us by the frequency and fervency of our prayers. Prayer is the breath of our spiritual lungs. Let us learn how precious are solitary places and homes when others are sleeping or away; in the night season, or a great while before day, when earth and heaven are still, and the busy world is not yet come abroad to trouble the creation of God. It must be by a rekindling amongst us of the spirit of prayer that we shall really grow in grace, and see the work of God's Holy Spirit in the hearts and lives of men. But to bring this about in any general way, we must do it *each one for himself* alone. We must be indeed men of prayer before we may ever hope to help others to become so. The most perfect prayers, it is said, are those of saints and of little children, because both have the same present awe of God, the same tenderness of conscience, the same

simplicity, humility, and truthfulness. The very weakness of children has the same effect as the strength of the saints. Children have not yet learned to know the world, and saints have renounced it: both in some measure fulfil my text. So let us do—"Stand in awe, and sin not; commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still."

SERMON V.

"For thou, Lord, wilt give thy blessing unto the righteous; and with thy favourable kindness wilt thou defend him as with a shield."

PSALM V. 12.

THE two former psalms immediately before this seem to have been prayers for the *evening*. This psalm is one to be used in the *morning*. For both the last psalms have referred to lying down to sleep; but this refers to our first work of each new day. "My voice," it says, "shalt thou hear betimes, O Lord; early in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up." I take the first six verses to be a sort of preparation for the prayers which follow. Its first words are a petition to God to hear His worshipper. "Ponder my words, O Lord, consider my meditation. O hearken thou unto the voice of my calling, my King and my God: for unto thee will I make my prayer." None of us can practice *too* great reverence in approaching God. The greatest saints have ever been the most cautious and careful to avoid all irreverence and carelessness in their acts of worship, either in word or manner. To this day most Eastern nations take off their

shoes on entering their places of worship, and come in barefoot. This custom very probably arose, if it did not exist even before that, from the command to Moses when he drew near the bush which burnt with fire, but was not consumed, God called to him from the midst of the fire, and said, "Take off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." We Christians mark our reverence for God's house of prayer by uncovering the head; and, except as a matter of necessity, which may happen occasionally, we ought to do this at *all* times—not merely on Sundays, but at *any* moment when we come into God's house; for God's house is always equally sacred. And though, my brethren, external reverence is thus good, and right, and necessary, yet I need scarcely say that the inward preparation of the heart is the most essential qualification for worshipping God aright. As the psalmist says elsewhere, "I will worship toward thy holy temple with reverence and godly fear." It is for this purpose that all devout people, on first coming into their place in church, kneel down and pray to God, just as the psalmist does in the first verse of this psalm, to hear their prayers, and help them to worship Him with true devotion and attention; for, as our Lord says, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." Next to this *preparation* for prayer is the *time* here spoken of—"early in the morning." Like our Saviour's custom, to which I alluded in

dwelling upon the last psalm—"He rose up for His prayers a great while before it was yet day." The Sun of righteousness went forth to His prayer ere the sun of this world was shining on the earth. So should it be with us, if need be. *However* early we may have to begin and go forth to the work of each day, our prayers *must* be earlier still. We shall never enter heaven without prayer—without we are men of prayer. We might as well expect to live without breathing, as to grow in grace and finally be saved without regular, frequent, and earnest prayer. And, as I said before, whatever our difficulties may be in this respect, either from a crowded home or any other cause, somehow or other we *must* make, and if we really try to *make*, we shall always *find*, both a *time* and a *place* for our private prayers. It is sad to think that we cannot leave God's house open for this purpose every day, and all day long, in every parish, as used to be. In foreign countries, even in Mahometan lands, so great is the respect felt for God's house, that no one would ever dream of doing an injury to it, or anything in it, by night or by day; so that the Churches are left continually open at all hours for those who wish to enter in and pray. Thus it was at Jerusalem; and we know how continually our Lord, and after Him His apostles, made use of the temple for this purpose. "They were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God." Surely, brethren, there *ought* to be reverence enough in Christian people to preserve God's

house from any profane treatment; but, alas! I fear it is not so amongst us. If it were left open at all hours for all people who will to enter in here and pray, I fear harm and evil would arise. Let us at least try to practise ourselves, and teach others to practise, great love and reverence for God's house, and the time may yet return when it could be safely left open all the week long for God's people to use it for private devotion.

Next, the psalmist calls to mind how earnestly we must all try to avoid sin before our prayers can be acceptably offered up before God. No evil can dwell with Him. "The foolish" (that is, in Scripture language, the ungodly and unbelieving) "shall not stand in God's sight; for He hateth all them that work iniquity." The sin of *lying* is here especially mentioned as bringing upon us future destruction, as well also as cruelty and deceit. These things God cannot bear with. They shut the door of heaven in our face, and render our prayers, if we attempt to say them, useless, or worse than that. And when we feel that our sins weigh upon us, and prevent our being able to pray acceptably; if we ever feel in ourselves a desire to pray, but yet fear to approach the great and holy God whom we know that we have so often offended, what must be our first step? We must do like the awakened prodigal. When we have thus "come to ourselves," we must arise and go to our Father, and say unto Him first of all, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no

more worthy to be called thy son." We must bring before God with true faith the one great Sacrifice made on the cross for all sins which are truly repented of and forsaken. We must plead the all-sufficient merits of Him who died for us. "This is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

Don't let your sins stop your prayer, but confess and forsake them, and plead for your forgiveness, the one all-prevailing name, the one all-sufficient sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. God accepts us "in the Beloved." The eternal Son, who made us in the beginning, became man, not only to die for us, but to feel for us in all trials and troubles, and to show us by His own most blessed and most perfect example how to live so as to attain eternal life. "But as for me" (as the psalmist says here), "I will come into thine house even upon the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple." That "multitude of God's mercy" is expressed in the Saviour's work and love. We may be bold in Him, but it must be a boldness coupled with fear; it may be with true assurance and faith, but it must be also with reverence and godly fear. And now, after first preparing our hearts to address God, and choosing the early morning to direct our prayers unto Him, and knowing His holiness and hatred of sin—when we have laid our sins openly before Him, and pleaded for their forgiveness the one great sacrifice for all sin—when we

have thus come into His presence upon the multitude of His mercy, with and after this, what can be better for us to pray to God for than this: "Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness, because of mine enemies; make thy way plain before my face"? The path of righteousness is beset to us all by numberless enemies—enemies who it would be easier to resist if they were seen and known; but, as S. Paul says, we Christians "fight *not* against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." The very air we breathe is haunted by the spirits of evil. In one case alone, that of the poor demoniac whom our Lord healed, we read that "their name was legion, for many devils had entered into him." And though now Satan's power is greatly reduced and subdued, by the Spirit of God bestowed upon the Church since those days, still evil in some form or other is continually present within and around us, on this side or that. It approaches us we know not how, or by the words or example of some one else, in the way most likely for us to be led into it, or in some form most likely to entice us. As one of the best of men says, even "when I would do good, evil is present with me." And thus our Lord teaches us to say, *whenever* we kneel down upon our knees, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." Let us never expect or hope to be free from temptation. That time never

comes so long as we are in this world of sin. Beyond the grave we look forward with assurance to an entire freedom from everything of the kind, but never here, never in this life. Even our Saviour Christ, we know, suffered Satan's sorest temptations; but resisting them, "Satan departed from Him, and angels came and ministered unto Him." An intimation wonderful beyond measure, but most reassuring to our own hearts. The Lord experienced all, that He might have compassion upon all men in any trial or temptation we can ever have to undergo. And as it was thus with Him that Satan departed, and angels came, so with us it is ever true, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you; draw nigh unto God, and He will draw nigh unto you." It is our baptismal birthright that Satan no longer has power over us, except so far as we yield ourselves to his suggestions and enticements. It is hard to resist a temptation, but never impossible. God never suffers His people to be tried beyond what it is possible for them to bear. It is our weakness and our want of faith in God, our ignorance or disbelief of the gift of grace which is in us which makes us submit so readily and frequently to the suggestions of evil. Who would not conquer, if he did but know and believe that he could and can always conquer? It is our Saviour's perpetual promise, "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." And think of the blessedness which my text sets forth to all who thus strive and prevail:

"Thou, Lord, wilt give thy blessing unto the righteous; and with thy favourable kindness wilt thou defend Him as with a shield." God throws a shield and armour over His own people. Like Elisha on the mountain, surrounded by enemies; yet the whole district around was full of horses and chariots of fire, around him to protect him. So Stephen, the first martyr, when, kneeling down, he received the pitiless shower of stones which took away his life, yet in that moment Stephen saw heaven opened, and the Saviour Himself standing at the right hand of God; and so was joyfully translated from this earthly state to that which is incorruptible and eternal in the heavens. Let none of us then fear evil, so long as our hearts are stayed on God. Nothing can really hurt them who bear Christ within them. To them all sorrows are turned into joy, all pains to peace. Like the apostle, they may be "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; they may be poor, yet making many rich; they may have nothing, and yet possessing all things." And thus it is that "thou, O Lord, wilt give thy blessing unto the righteous; and with thy favourable kindness wilt thou defend Him as with a shield."

SERMON VI.

"For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?"—PSALM vi. 5.

THE psalm we have now come to is the first of those seven which are commonly called the Penitential Psalms, composed in confession of sin, and most suitable for all of us to use when a like burden and sense of sin rests upon us. All these seven psalms are used on Ash-Wednesday, the first day of Lent, the first three in the morning, the last three in the evening prayer, and the fifty-first in the Commination Service. It would be well for each of us to mark each of them in the margin of our Prayer Books with the word "Penitential." They are the 6th, 32nd, 38th, 51st, 102nd, 130th, and 143rd. The chief part of Psalm vi. is occupied with a prayer for God's pardon and forgiveness; but the last two verses of it declare the assurance that that prayer has been heard and answered. It is like Nathan's coming to David and convicting him of his double sin, of murder and adultery, saying, "Thou art the man." David is moved to confess and be sorry for his crime. "I have sinned," he cried in the bitterness of his soul. And so

deep and true was his repentance, that the prophet is commanded to say, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." We may easily see the value which God sets upon this state of heart by comparing it with the conduct of our first parents, who brought sin and death into the world. When they had transgressed and eaten of the fruit of the tree of which God had said, "Thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," they, instead of coming forward and with sorrow saying, "I have sinned," hid themselves in the garden from the presence of the Lord God; and when questioned directly about their sin, the man turns the blame from himself on to the woman, and she excuses herself by accusing the serpent. There is no saying what might have been the result to us in every generation had they thrown themselves at the feet of the Lord God, and confessed and lamented their sin like David. God might have remitted in some measure at least that perpetual inheritance of sin and evil, of disease and death, which passes upon each and every generation of men. So grievous is it in power and in God's sight, that only the atonement of God's ever blessed Son on the cross puts it away. And though this birth-sin be remitted to each of us, as it is, in and by the sacrament of baptism, still its power clings to us, and follows us, and besets us all our life long, and is only kept in check and subdued by little and little, here in one, and there in another,

through the gift and working in us of the blessed Spirit of God. Happily for David, he neither denied nor concealed his guilt, but bitterly lamented it, and openly confessed it. "O Lord," he cries, "rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy heavy displeasure. Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak: O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed. My soul also is sore troubled. Return, O Lord, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake." Then he turns to the littleness of man, and the shortness of life compared with God's greatness and goodness: "For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?" We shall find very nearly the same expression as this occurring in several other of the psalms. Thus in Psalm xxx. 9: "What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?" Again, in Psalm lxxxviii. 11, 12: "Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave? or thy faithfulness in destruction? Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? or thy righteousness in the land where all things are forgotten?" And once more, in Psalm cxv. 17: "The dead praise not thee, O Lord, neither all they that go down into silence?"

Now as this same reference to the silence of the grave and the departure of the dead out of this world occur so frequently, it may be worth while to consider for a moment in what sense we are to take such words.

There is no doubt that in one way David understood just what we understand, that this life is our only period of probation. He seems elsewhere to have had apprehensions of the judgment-day, and of the account which each departed soul will have to give of all things done in the body. And so we cannot doubt that he saw and knew that this life is our only period for work and usefulness in God's sight; that as we commonly say, "As the tree falls, so will it lie." We shall appear at the judgment-day what we have made ourselves and become, for good or for bad, while on earth. "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment, and some they follow after," says the apostle. And on the other hand, every good thing done, desired, or followed after through the Holy Spirit's influence, is treasured up and remembered before God. David felt that whatever he was to be, to become, to receive, or to suffer in the state beyond the grave, was all to be begun while he was in the flesh. And no one, I suppose, who realizes this but must feel how short a period our life on earth is for such mighty and eternal consequences to be evolved from it with unfailing certainty. Take the longest life of man, and of that some years are past in unconscious infancy, and his last years perhaps are shrouded with a very similar failing of bodily and mental powers. And while we are in the prime of life our thoughts and energies, and powers of mind and body, are and ought to be very fully occupied with our

proper duties and calling in life. Every man is intended to go forth diligently "to his work and to his labour until the evening." "Not slothful in business, though fervent in spirit." This world is not intended for the idle, nor idleness for it; but all is a continual round of care, and labour, and work of one kind or other for us who are in health and strength.

But the great beauty of our Christian faith lies, my brethren, in this, not that it takes us *out* of our position or work in life, but that it leads us to fulfil it with conscientious regard to God's will and approval. Even the smallest thing in our every-day round of duties we are taught to fulfil in a right and religious spirit and temper. There is nothing too trivial but that it may be done, or left undone, simply as a matter of faith and love towards God. "Whether ye eat or drink," says S. Paul, "or *whatsoever* ye do, do all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." And our Saviour Himself has most fully confirmed this importance of the little things in life when He promises that a cup of cold water only, given to a child in His name, that is (because he and you belong to Christ), for His sake—that little deed of Christian love will have its own separate and distinct reward at the judgment-day. No wonder, then, that David felt—as we may well do—how essential to his happiness it was to obtain God's favour, and that at once, without delay. "For in death no man remembereth thee: in the grave who shall give

thee thanks?" My time passeth away as a shadow; I am here to-day, and gone to-morrow. O Lord, let me have the assurance of thy mercy and forgiveness at once, lest death should overtake me, and I should be cast off from thy mercies. In this way, I say, David saw and felt much as we Christians do, how truly all our hopes beyond the grave rest on our few years' passage through this life! There is no preparation-time after it. If the tide is lost, it is lost for ever. If the seed-time is lost, and is thrown away, and allowed to pass, there is no sowing in summer, no sowing in autumn, for the harvest of the end. We have but *one* day of salvation: its sun sets once and for ever upon us, until the everlasting day dawn. There lies between the one and the other only the night—that night "in which no man *can* work." How many thousands of men and women hear and know all this continually, but forget to *act* upon it! The seed is sown among thorns, which grow up with it, and choke it. The cares, and pleasures, and riches of life choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful in them. What multitudes there may be beyond the floods, beyond the clouds, in the unseen world of spirits, who, like Dives, are lamenting, and will do so for ever more and more, the waning and loss of all those opportunities which they had on earth of being saved! How must they long for one ray of light yet to remain of their day of grace! How bitterly and unavailingly must they mourn over all they had,

but have lost; all they have lost that they might have had! We can think of them only in these words: "For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?"

But if it be so with them, my brethren, what *is* it with ourselves, and what *will* it be? Shall we be like them, or shall we survive and escape? Shall we have no remembrance of God in death? In the grave, are we to be precluded from giving Him thanks? Day by day we are making choice of this for ourselves. We are hastening on to the unalterable state, where we shall praise God for ever, or never. We are like the sculptor chiselling an inscription upon marble. Well done or badly done, clearly engraved, or badly formed, or wrongly spelt, still those letters remain in imperishable characters. The sculptor's success, or his mistakes, both *remain;* no time will fade, no water will wash away, what is engraved in stone. And the time, too, to us is like his. A very few days or hours sufficed for a skilful hand to engrave each of those old monuments which fill our churches and last on for hundreds of years. So with our heavenly and eternal work, "the time is short;" but its records and its effects are lasting; they endure from generation to generation. We are fixing our place every day with all the greater precision and certainty in the land beyond the grave. If we live *here* to God's praise and honour, we shall live *there* in His presence, where is "fulness of joy for ever and

ever." If otherwise, then, as my text says, so we shall indeed find: "In death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?" No! old memories of earth, what we are, and what we did, will pass with us into our new state of happiness or misery. There is not a day between the one state and the other. Our Lord on the cross said to the penitent thief, "*To-day*," not to-morrow, not next week, or next month, or a thousand years hence, but "*to-day* shalt thou be with me in paradise." Let us be stirred up by such thoughts to engrave for ourselves in the imperishable records of the book of life the record of a life spent by us, through God's grace, to His honour, and in His service. Let it testify to us that as Christ our Lord triumphed over sin, and Satan, and the world; so we, through and in the gift of the most Holy Spirit, bestowed by the diligent use of all the means of grace, like Him, in our measure, have triumphed, and shall share His glory. As the Saviour died for sin once, but rose in glory, so let us perfect His resurrection in our walking faithfully in all good works and newness of life; even as the apostle says—"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."

SERMON VII.

"*For the righteous God trieth the very hearts and reins.*"
PSALM vii. 9.

THIS psalm might almost be called an Advent Psalm from the continual reference in it to God's judgments—His trial of men's hearts and ways, so as to accept and clear the righteous, but punish and bring to nought the wicked. This one thought of God's judgment of men seems to run through the whole psalm. Thus in verse 6 it says: "Arise up for me in the *judgment* that thou hast commanded;" in verse 8: "The Lord shall *judge* His people: give sentence with me, O Lord (that is, pronounce me to be innocent); in verse 10: "For the righteous God *trieth* the very hearts and reins;" in verse 12: "God is a righteous *judge*, strong and patient." This will, I think, show you that the thought of God's judgment of men's hearts and ways is the one principal subject which runs through the whole of this psalm. It would appear to have been composed by David under some trouble or persecution, of which he felt deeply the injustice; probably it was

Saul's repeated efforts to destroy him. We know how jealous that wicked man became of David in his old age, because after the slaughter of the Philistines they sang this song: "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands;" and the more the hearts of Israel were drawn towards David, the more did Saul desire to destroy his future successor. On the other hand, David twice spared Saul the king's life when he was altogether in David's power; and so he could justly plead thus with God: "Give sentence with me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to the innocency that is in me."

And I think, to understand this psalm aright, we must refer it altogether to the assurance that God will ultimately clear those who are falsely accused of anything in this world, and not apply it to the matter of our transgressions against God. It evidently applies to one who is falsely accused, and unjustly persecuted for faults against another in this world, which he feels and knows he has never committed. Thus, like almost every other psalm, it takes us on from David and his persecution by Saul to the persecution endured by our Lord Jesus Christ at the hands of sinful men. We know well how His enemies stood and vehemently accused Him; we know how the chief priests had to hire false witnesses in order to procure the Lord Jesus Christ's condemnation; and we know how Pilate perverted judgment by pronouncing His innocence in the

same breath with His condemnation to death, even the death of the cross. "He took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this *just* person;" and then delivered Him over to the Jews to crucify Him. "Take ye Him," he said, "and crucify Him: for I find no fault in Him. No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him."

And often since that time evil has *seemed* to prevail over good. The righteous are often despised in the earth, and have frequently been accused of many crimes of which they were wholly innocent. Beginning with the first martyr, S. Stephen, down to the present hour, how many have had to learn the bitter lesson that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God!" Now to all such, should such times ever return again, as they may in any land, the sustaining confidence of the saints is in the knowledge that all will be righted in the end; all the evils done under the sun will have their end. In the end God will justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked. This may uphold faithful men in all times of difficulty, trial, and persecution. The Lord Himself, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame; and all His saints, from the earliest to the latest times, have been upheld by the knowledge that God will judge the people, will bring to an end the wickedness and power of the ungodly, and will ever

preserve them that are true of heart. And oftentimes God brings it to pass upon wicked men that they perish by the very way and means they designed for the destruction of the righteous. Thus Saul sought to destroy David by means of the Philistines; but he was himself slain by those very Philistines who he had hoped would slay David. You have often read how Daniel was preserved in the lions' den, so that the wild beasts touched him not; but the men who cast him in were thrown to those lions, and perished immediately. In the book of Esther we read how Haman was hanged on the very gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. And we all know how the Jews procured from Pontius Pilate the Roman governor the order for our Lord's crucifixion, but in a few years' time were utterly and miserably destroyed themselves by the Roman army. Thus it is proved, what God's word says, "Be sure your sin will find you out." Even in this world men thus often and often suffer in the very way and by the very means they have used in their transgressions. God makes "the wickedness of the ungodly to come to an end; but He guides the just." "He preserveth them that are true of heart."

Now, why or how does all this come about? Hear my text: "The righteous God *trieth* the very hearts and reins." It is not merely that God *knows* every way of all men; it is not merely that His eye readeth, as it does, the very thoughts and intents of every heart

amongst us; but He TRIETH each separate thought and intent of that heart; He weighs every word; He *marks* every little variation and complexion of man's thoughts, and words, and works, and intents. God not only *knows* everything, even the most secret matters, in the life and conduct of every one of us, but He registers it all in His own book of life or of death. And why? Because one day "He will judge the world in righteousness." Sinful men are glad to say and to persuade themselves thus: "Tush! God will not see, neither will the God of Jacob regard it." But God *does* see, and God *will* regard it. The psalmist reminds us of this almighty power of God in seeing and hearing everything, by saying, "He that made the eye, shall *He* not see? or He that *made* the ear, shall *He* not hear?" He who *gave* those very powers of sense to man must possess them Himself in a thousandfold mightier and in an infinite degree; and thus it is told us, that He so regards us as to number the hairs on every head, and pierces even the thoughts and intents of the heart. I would then that we could all bear constantly in mind these words of my text: "The righteous God *trieth* the very hearts and reins." Say to yourselves, my brethren, once or twice, as you walk home from church this morning, or as you wake in the night, these words: "The righteous God trieth the very hearts and reins." It will make us think more of what we call *little* sins, and it will make us value more and more every greater or less opportunity of receiving grace

or of doing good. It will make us also watch more carefully the springs and intents of our hearts. Let us often ask ourselves, Why do I do this? Why do I desire this? or, Why *don't* I do this or that? To watch our own hearts is by no means so easy as, perhaps, we may ourselves suppose. Our besetting sin is generally that very form of evil of which we are least of all conscious or aware of in ourselves. Men are often deceived by no one so much as in and by themselves. They suppose themselves to be very *different* from what they really are. They have not gone below the outside; they never try to search themselves as God searches them, through and through, and so they don't *know* their own selves. All the faultfinding which goes on in us of our neighbours arises chiefly from our knowing so little of ourselves; for, as our Lord says, we desire to pull out a mere *speck* from our brother's eye, when a much larger *defect*—a beam is in our own eye. And not only this, but all our works and ways take their rise and course from our hearts, which are the centre and spring of all our actions and motives. Now God tries *them*—tries them *now*, day by day, as a preparatory step towards the great day of trial, when the secrets of all hearts will be disclosed before men and angels. Perhaps nothing makes us so conscious of our sins as this thought of God's clear and accurate knowledge of our hearts. Take but one hour in a day, and write over it the words of my text: "The righteous God trieth the very hearts and

reins;" *e.g.* take this last hour since we came into church. Here we have been in God's more special presence. It is not only that here, as always and everywhere, He sees us and knows us, but according to His own most sure promise He comes into the midst of us. This is no common place; it is God's house, it is the gate of heaven. Here, if anywhere around us, in each parish, the angels of God ascend and descend, bringing us God's favours down from heaven, taking back our poor, unworthy offerings of thanks and praise and prayer. But couple with this thought the words of my text: "The righteous God trieth the very hearts and reins." Your prayers, my brethren, have been heard; have they been accepted? Your knees may have been bent, but have your hearts been indeed lifted up? Have you joined with us *aloud*, as you ought to do, in the responses and repetitions, and the continual "Amen," and so made our public prayers your very own? Or have you been merely *listening* to the prayers and praises of the Church on earth, but taking no real part in them yourselves? Or have you failed even of doing that by indulging a thousand vain thoughts, which might be harmless at other times and in suitable places? And next time we celebrate Holy Communion, I suppose, as usual, the chief proportion of those who are present will leave directly after the sermon is over. When Christ our Master calls out to you, and bids you, "Do this in remembrance of *Me*, Who came into this world for your

salvation," too many, alas! from week to week, from year to year, *never* obey that call, *never* accept that gracious invitation, never "do" it once in their whole life! You feel yourselves weak in grace, and you wonder you do not grow in grace. The wonder would be, if you did grow without using the means Christ ordained to that very end, and not that you should seem to make no progress. As well might a starving man wonder at his own loss of strength and failing power; for Christ says, "My flesh is meat *indeed*, and my blood is drink *indeed*." We cannot conquer sin without God's heavenly grace. That heavenly grace must be sought for, and specially sought for, through those outward and visible signs and means He has Himself ordained for this very end; but they must be sought for with a holy, faithful, penitent, and humble spirit, remembering always that "the righteous God trieth the very hearts and reins," but that He says to all of us, "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

SERMON VIII.

"*O Lord our Governor, how excellent is thy Name in all the world! thou that hast set thy glory above the heavens. . . . What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?*"—PSALM viii. 1, 4.

THIS short but beautiful psalm is one of two (8th and 9th) supposed to have been composed by David in commemoration of his victory, many years before, over the giant of Gath, Goliath, whom he slew with a stone from his sling, and afterwards beheaded; and, like most other psalms, has three direct applications—first, to David, who composed it; secondly, to "David's greater Son," our Lord Jesus Christ; and thirdly, to ourselves, the people of God in all times.

As it regards *David*, we see at once in the second verse the application of the words to his victory over Goliath. He was then, we are told, but a youth, and of a ruddy countenance, the youngest of his father's sons, a mere shepherd boy; yet he dared to fight with the Philistine, a man of war from his youth, who had defied the armies of Israel, and had hitherto found none in Israel to accept his challenge. God gave him

the victory, because he trusted in the Lord his God. The Philistine trusted in his armour, in his shield, and sword, and stature, and despised the youth who had so bravely ventured to engage with him. But God showed at once His strength and power. The giant fell as soon as the combatants came within sight of each other. Thus did God ordain strength in the hands of a mere lad, in years and size, when compared with the Philistine of gigantic stature. But David would seem to say, "How can a man do otherwise than trust thee, O God, when he looks up to the sky above his head, and sees the mighty powers there moving in the heavens with their perfect regularity and order, year after year, by thy providence and ordaining—'the sun to rule the day, the moon and the stars to govern the night?' What indeed is man, that thou, the great God and Creator of them all, art mindful of him, a worm of the earth, so short-lived, and so bound down in sin and misery?" Yet as He took David from the sheepfold to be the king of Israel, and to rule His chosen people, crowning him in the eyes of men with power and glory, after years of tribulation, so will He raise us, if we love and fear Him, to everlasting glory and honour, of which His special love shown to us in this world is both a pledge and token. "O Lord our Governor, how excellent is thy name in all the world!"

And then, if we turn from David to David's great and glorious Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, here we have

express authority for referring this psalm to *Him*. For S. Paul says in Heb. ii. that these words are expressly written of our Lord's humiliation on earth, ending in the glories of His resurrection from the dead and ascension into heaven. God the Son, who made the worlds, became for our sakes *lower* than the angels for a little while. He left the glories of His eternal home in heaven, and became *Man*—the true Man—for us, partaker of our nature in everything except its sin, which He was free from by a birth beyond and above man's ordinary beginning. This is the most abundant cause of wonder and thankfulness. God's glory and love is greater in redemption even than in creation. The sun, and moon, and stars, moving in their appointed spheres, are stupendous proofs of God's power and love for us; but far more than their number, regularity, and order, is the incarnation of the eternal Son a proof of God's power and goodness. He came down to us, emptying Himself of His divine state and glory, that He might make amends for all transgressions of men, and recover for our fallen race, who were His enemies, a right and place in God's eternal kingdom. Thus for a little while—through thirty and three years of pain, and poverty, and suffering—the Son of man was made lower than the angels; but after His resurrection He was "crowned with glory and worship." All power in heaven and in earth was then given into His hands, who is partaker of our flesh and blood. A true Man

in one person for ever and ever with the eternal God, He is not ashamed to call us His brethren. He has raised man up from his low estate to the highest place around the eternal throne. And even while on earth all created things bowed down before Him, and obeyed His word. When the sea was stirred by a mighty tempest, at His one word, "Peace, be still," "the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." Evil spirits fell down at His feet, and owned His power. Every species of human suffering and pain vanished by a word or a touch from Him. Even the dead returned to life again; and in the barren wilderness the loaves of bread and two small fish multiplied themselves indefinitely as they passed through His almighty hands, so as to feed five thousand men, beside women and children. He was man, and yet He did the works of God, and proved Himself to be God as well as man. Even the fish of the sea paid the tribute money for Him and His disciples, which was demanded of every Israelite for the temple at Jerusalem. Thus was everything put in subjection to His hands. And then the after effects of this wonderful history have been like the perfecting of praise from the mouth of babes and sucklings. "Yea; have ye never read," said the Lord to the lords of the Pharisees, when they saw the children crying Hosannah in the temple to His honour, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast *perfected* praise?" So it has been ever since. The kingdom of the crucified has

spread, and is established in the earth—a kingdom *in*, but not *of* this world. Thousands of changes have taken place in all earthly thrones and dominions since the days of Christ; but one kingdom alone has stood throughout all changes in the world, and will stand to the end of time—the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. What was sown in weakness has risen in power.

The Head was cut off by a cruel death. He was crucified. But that Head multiplied into the twelve apostles, and they likewise spread the good news of the heavenly kingdom and multiplied its subjects, and rulers throughout all the earth, till the old prophecy draws on more and more to its fulfilment: "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Faith can remove mountains; the valleys are filled up by it; and the rough places made smooth as often as again and again it becomes true, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things." The fierce natures of untamed men are softened and trained by the gospel of peace; the blood of the cross removes the curse pronounced on every sinner that turneth him unto the Lord, and God's Holy Spirit is given to sinful men to set us free from the dominion of Satan, and thus every thing at length is put in subjection under Christ's feet.

My brethren, we in the Church of Christ have the blessing of knowing and hearing all this. We are the

guests invited to the royal banquet. We are the chosen people of God, who as our Head was made for a little while lower than the angels, but is now crowned with glory and honour; and we are promised, that if we will *so* it shall be in like manner with us as with Him. The glories that the Saviour won for man in *His own* person, He deigns and desires to share with us. "Beloved, NOW are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be *like* Him; for we shall see Him as He is." "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father." Remember, however, these glorious promises are given only to the *righteous*, only to the saints of God. In them God by His Spirit subdues more and more the power of sin, and their evil nature, and *lifts* them up to be in some measure like unto their Lord, even on earth, that so they may be *with* the Lord, and shine in His glory in the world beyond the grave. "O Lord, our Governor, how excellent is thy name in all the world!" When we think of all that God has done for us, and has promised to us, it is sad to think, brethren, that there is for ever an abundant crop of tares growing up and choking His good seed; chaff abounding, and sometimes almost altogether destroying the good seed; men despising the privileges of grace amid which they live, and of which they hear with the

greatest unconcern. If we all loved Christ as we might, and as we ought, there would be no vacant spot in this or any church, Sunday by Sunday. Men would press into God's house, especially in the early part of the Lord's-day; all would be of one heart and mind; there would be no non-communicants amongst us as now; all would love to approach the table of their Lord, to meet Him there, and partake of His body and blood, which preserves the souls of faithful men unto eternal life. This is how this psalm applies specially to *us*. God is mindful of us. Not only has He given us those ordinances in heaven by which our seasons, and days, and nights, are regulated throughout all generations, but He has given us His *Son*, made for a little while lower than the angels, but now crowned with glory and honour, all things in heaven and earth being made subject unto Him; but man only, for whom all this is done, alone rebels against God's work done *in* and *for* him. Like the Israelites in the wilderness, we are all apt to be stiffnecked and perverse; choosing rather to follow the untamed inclinations of our corrupt nature than the influence and strivings within us of the Spirit of God. Here and there God's work is more or less perfected in men. The old power of sin is cast out, and a man delights in all good works, follows after that perfect holiness "without which no man shall see the Lord;" and so subdues every form of sin, which like sheep and oxen, the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea, is

prone by nature to wander unrestrained and unchecked. The taming of the heart is a hard work under grace, and is impossible without it. Men must give time and care to the saving of their souls, or they cannot and will not be saved. God's grace enables us to swim against the stream; but if we cease to strive and exert ourselves, then the current of our old evil nature carries us back, and we shall wake up at the last day to find how true our heavenly Lord's warning words were: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Let us value our high privileges. Let us strive and pray day by day to become holier and better in God's sight, by God's heavenly grace, than we are. Let us love the things that Christ loves, and hate what He hates; and so forming in us the mind and preparations of heaven, we shall only in the resurrection know to the full this truth: "O Lord, our governor, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!"

SERMON IX.

"*The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy Name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast never failed them that seek thee.*"

PSALM ix. 9, 10.

THIS psalm, like the last, is supposed to have special reference to David's victory over the giant Goliath of Gath. We can easily suppose how that event, above almost all others, must have continually dwelt in the psalmist's mind. Amid all the causes of thankfulness which he experienced, none would be likely to move his heart more than the recollection of his first great deliverance—the first circumstance which brought him into notice. Though every day we live, my brethren, testifies to God's care and love for each one of us, yet any special and unusual deliverance more than common would surely make us more particularly sensible of God's mercy and goodness towards us. If saved when our life was despaired of, or in a shipwreck, or fire, or some fearful accident, these things would be to us like David's preservation from Goliath. Years afterwards our minds would revert to that event, and most likely

we should reflect that to it we attribute all the earnest feelings of religion we possess. This is but a natural feeling, yet such an occasion may not happen to every one of us. The lives of most of us are probably not marked by any great stirring and striking event; but they *are* marked by daily mercies and providences which perhaps we think little of, because they are so common, so regular, and so unfailing. Our health, and food, and clothes, kind friends, and a happy home, all these, with the thousand little associations which endear life to each of us, are God's *gifts* to us; they are God's providings. He is "the author and giver of all good things," both in our souls and bodies. We must not overlook the lesser blessings we enjoy because they are continually renewed to us, or because some one or more special acts of mercy and goodness may or may not have marked our course in life. I think that there are two parts in this psalm which deserve to be considered separately. To-day there is God's care for all of us, especially when troubles come upon us. "Thou, Lord, hast never failed them that seek thee." Then there are these striking words, which it will be well for us to give attention to another day: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God." To-day let us look only to these former words: "The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy Name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast never failed

them that seek thee." Here are two classes described—those whom God seeks, and those who seek God. God is described as very near to them both. We all know how difficult it sometimes is to think and feel that our very trials in life are proofs of God's care and love for us; and yet we are assured that they are intended to be so to us all. I do not say that sorrows, and sufferings, and trials are not often sent as punishments upon men. There can be no doubt that they are so. But even then mercy triumphs over justice; for God would thus bring back to Himself the wanderers. Men's hearts are often softened by trials, just as we read in the parable of the prodigal son—that *his* misfortunes brought him to himself, and led him to determine thus, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

It is very sad to think, brethren, that very few, if any, of us are able to bear for long outward blessings and prosperity without having our hearts drawn away from God, like that prodigal in his prosperity, rather than to God who gives them all to us. Yet such is but too surely the case. If a man really loves God while he is well, and strong, and rich, and prosperous in the world, it is perhaps one of the greatest triumphs of grace over nature which is ever to be found. But no one of us goes on through life, if for long, without trials of *some* kind. They are sure to be our portion

sooner or later. We must not wish or expect it to be otherwise, or that we shall escape them.

And when that moment overtakes us, how comforting is the thought that "God is a defence for the oppressed, even a refuge in due time of trouble." Our Lord Jesus Christ not only died for us that through His blood we might receive justification and be accepted, but He shared to the full in our nature, so that, as S. Paul says, "we Christians have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." And then he adds, "Therefore, let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." This is very much what the latter part of my text says. In the first part of it we have God seeking us, and declared to be a defence and refuge in the time of trouble. In the latter part we have the blessing named which belongs to them *who seek Him:* "Thou, Lord, hast never failed them that seek thee." This, brethren, is far better than the former, because if we do not seek God, God will seek us from the love He bears to us for Christ's sake; but it is far better and happier that we should with a perfect heart seek Him of ourselves. There is no limit put to the power which men have with God who seek Him with their whole heart in the fulness of faith. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." "Verily, verily, I say unto

you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." This is how God speaks to us of our seeking Him. Yet how few, alas! really do seek Him with their whole heart early and late in life. Our prayers and our life must answer to one another. We should all try, my brethren, to seek unto God by a life of prayer and consistent holiness; the one helps the other. God is pleased when we try to do all as He would have us do, just as an earthly parent is pleased with the child that trys to do all that he wishes and commands. Such a spirit is very much helped by awakening more and more in our hearts a sense of our daily dependence upon God, and of His care and thought for us. The daily blessings which each one of us receive are manifold; but because they are given to us so regularly and unfailingly, we but too often forget the Giver in the enjoyment of His gifts. When Israel was in the wilderness, they first murmured when food and water fell short; and when these were miraculously provided and daily bestowed, they then murmured at the continual and unvarying supply thus afforded them. And so oftentimes with us, what we have for long enjoyed we scarcely know or value till it is lost. We murmur or are thankless amid the very abundance of blessings which God bestows upon us.

Let us gather up one or two hints from these few thoughts. First, be sure, brethren, that God so loves us through Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom we are reconciled to Him, that He never gives over any man without trying in some way to bring him back to Himself. He loves best those who seek Him—them He never fails nor forsakes. The earlier the better that we seek Him, for "they who seek me *early*," He says, "shall find me." But if we put off and put away *our* love in response to *His* love, then oftentimes God takes some steps which shall lessen our love for this world, and loosen our affections from it. He, as it were, puts out His hand to save us, like S. Peter when he left the boat to walk to his Master on the troubled sea. When he offered to come, Christ said "Come;" and when his faith began to fail, and he cried out, "Lord, save me," Christ held out His hand, caught him, and saved him from sinking. And so it is ever with all of us. "Thou, Lord, hast NEVER failed them that seek Thee." Will not this thought lead our hearts to desire and seek Him? He will never fail *us* if we do. Amid all the temptations of sin, those that easily and constantly beset us, or those which overtake us suddenly and in a moment, He will preserve us by His grace, by the power of His Spirit. In all difficulties, and trials, and troubles, He is ever ready to be our refuge and defence. Sinful men or evil spirits are powerless to harm them in whom Christ lives. Let us be God's true children and

servants, and then we may say with S. Paul, "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Amen.

SERMON X.

"*The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God.*"—PSALM ix. 17.

THIS psalm, which, as I have said before, is supposed to have reference to David's slaughter of Goliath the giant by his sling and a stone, presents us with a comparison between God's care for His own people and His punishment of the wicked. Of the first it says: "The Lord will be a defence for the oppressed, even a refuge in due time of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast never failed them that seek thee." Of others this psalm speaks thus: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God." In some places this word "hell" means only the grave; in others "the hidden place;" *i.e.* the place of departed spirits, as when we say of our Lord in the Creed, "He descended into hell;" or as Psalm xvi. says of Him, "Thou shalt not leave my soul in hell; neither shalt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption;" while in other places it evidently means what we commonly intend by it in

these days, the place of eternal torment, the unquenchable fire, the bottomless pit, as it is elsewhere called. That is the meaning which we must certainly give the word here; for all of us alike descend into the grave, and the soul of each of us alike takes its departure to the world of spirits. But here David intends to express the utter destruction of the wicked when they are cast out of God's sight and favour, and are condemned to their eternal torments. We must remark, too, that there are here two classes of persons described—those who are notoriously wicked, open sinners, shameless and hardened transgressors, and those who simply "forget God" in the world, leave Him out of their thoughts, give themselves up to the pleasures, and riches, and business, and pursuits of this life, without any heart or concern for God. These are short words, easy to be remembered, and very profitable for all of us to remember: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God." And when our Lord Himself says that the way of destruction is broad, and its gate wide, and many are they who walk along that broad road, and pass through that wide gate, we cannot be wrong in saying that these words of my text describe the fate of a *very large* part of mankind in all ages. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God." Now there is much less difficulty in describing the first of these classes than in describing the latter. God has laid down for us many

plain rules for our guidance, such as the Ten Commandments, and as He has repeatedly told us in the last revelation of His will contained in the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament, that they who offend in these things shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven. It is very plain and easy for us to say, that those who openly break the first or second table of the law of God will not and cannot be saved. We find a list of sins and persons given us in several of the Epistles, of whom it is said that they who thus offend shall have no part or place in the kingdom of heaven. They who blaspheme against God, and profane His name and day, or anything which belongs to Him—they who are wilfully disobedient to and dishonour their parents, murderers and haters of one another, adulterers, or other vile, impure, and unholy persons, thieves, false swearers, covetous persons, who are idolators, *i.e.* money worshippers, all these are so openly offending against the first and plain rules of God's commandments, that we have little difficulty in fixing upon them, and fearing for them, that unless they heartily and quickly repent, they will be lost; they will have the final sentence pronounced against them, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." But when we come to the second part of my text, they who "forget God," it is much more difficult to point out these, and describe them, than it is the former; for, as S. Paul says, "Some men's sins are open beforehand,

going before to judgment; and some men they follow after," so here we may sometimes be able to say of a person here or there he is clearly at the present moment one of those "wicked who will be turned into hell." He is a drunkard, or a thief, or a sensualist, or a profane swearer, and so forth. There is no mistake at all about *him*. But when we come to define those who "forget God," there is the difficulty. For this we need the penetrating eye of God; we need to see in darkness as well as light; we need to read each heart, as God reads it, before we can lay our finger upon one or other, and say for certain, "He is one of these." Herein lies the great "deceitfulness of sin." "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light;" the wolf is clad in sheep's clothing; the tree is looking beautiful with leaves only when it is the time of fruit; the tares are growing up so closely and so alike to the wheat that we cannot separate them until the harvest.

My brethren, it is to this state of heart and life that we need all of us to look more closely. It is possible to "forget God," and yet not to manifest that forgetfulness to the eyes of others, nor even to be conscious of it ourselves. There is not a thing we do in the world but it may become a habit; and habit is second nature; and what we do mechanically we do without thought or difficulty of any kind. And so with our religion. We may be living in the midst of every possible blessing and enjoyment of religion, and yet all the while really

"forget God." We may dwell in the midst of light, and yet shut our eyes to it, and close our ears even to God's words, lest "we should see with our eyes, and hear with our ears, and understand with our heart, and be converted" altogether to God.

Our Saviour speaks of the religionists of His day as whited sepulchres—beautiful outwardly, but inwardly full of all uncleanness. That danger has not passed away for us. We have the same evil nature to contend against in our day as they had; we have the same besetting sins surrounding first one and then another of us as they had. The same evil spirit still "walketh about, seeking whom he may devour"—lays wait for us in secret places, makes evil to appear good, or draws a veil before our spiritual sight which may hide God and heaven from our view. All this is the same with us as with old and past generations of men. What are we, if we would each look narrowly into our own hearts? Are we among the people that forget God? The very next psalm to this says: "The ungodly is so proud that he *careth not* for God; neither is God in all his thoughts." This means something of the same kind as the last words of my text. Depend upon it, it takes much time and trouble to make sure, and find out whether we "forget" God or not. You may say, "Here I am in church, in God's house; therefore I do not forget God." But that does not follow. Our Lord remarked once of those about Him: "This people

honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." They forgot God, though they worshipped Him. A man may hear and repeat every prayer; but it may be after all only a lip-service: his mind may all the time have been filled with a thousand vain, sinful, distracting thoughts, forgetful of God. And some people, I fear, come to church only from worldly motives; and they "forget God" even while here.

Judas was a daily companion of the Lord, and went forth at His command to preach the gospel, and call men to repentance, and to heal the sick, and do other miracles; yet all the while he was a thief. And while in the midst of the greatest and highest privileges, amid sights which prophets and kings had desired to see, but had not seen them, he forgat God. Any of us who altogether lives and works for this world, he forgets God, for "we cannot serve God and mammon." "No man can serve two masters" with equal and perfect fidelity. I fear many who rest from work, and perhaps worship God, on Sundays, nevertheless altogether forget God all the week long, through six out of the seven days. Day by day every one of us receives infinite blessings, and oftentimes special mercies and unexpected goodness. But we forget the Giver in the use and enjoyment of His gifts. We may well pray, as our Collect teaches us to do, "Lord of all power and might, who art the Author and Giver of all good things; Graft in our hearts the love of thy name, increase in us true religion, nourish

us with all goodness, and of thy great mercy keep us in the same." Another man has some sudden temptation to sin come upon him—and it is one of the offices of the Holy Spirit to bring God's will to our remembrance—but the thought of God, the command and will of God at the moment, the special passage of the Bible which might have restrained him, never crosses his mind. He has been in the habit of forgetting God, and so God is silent to him. When our Lord was tempted, He replied, "It is written;" when the next temptation came, again He replied, "It is written;" and thus through remembrance of and obedience to God's word He resisted Satan, and the devil departed from Him. Let us pray and try, my brethren, that we may never "forget God." There is not the smallest act in life, but it may be done to God, or not at all so. Our remembrance of Him may be as continual and minute as His for us in counting the hairs of our head, and in feeding and providing for the smallest bird and insect that has life. The great secret of all this is to be found in this maxim which our Lord has given us: "Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness." Make it your first duty in life to please and serve God. Do not give up God for any thing else whatever; but give up any thing or every thing else for Him. *There* is the proof of love; and where there is love there is memory of God. If you see or hear a plain command of Christ's, do it, whatever it costs you.

Suppose you say, "I am afraid others will say this or that of me if I do so;" or, "I will do it to-morrow, or next year, or when I am older," that will not do. Your duty is to do it at once. If you give up your prayers for anything or everything else, instead of everything else for them; if you do not feel a dread of temptation, and determine to resist it; if you spend your Sundays in idleness, and anywhere else rather than in church; if you do not determine in your inmost heart, that whatever it costs you will win heaven; all these are ways in which any of us may even now be on the high road to "forgetting God"—yes, God who is so good to us, our God who made us, our God who sent His only Son to die for us, our God from whom alone all good things do come. Remember, my brethren, it is easier to forget than to remember Him. We walk by faith, and not by sight. In the world beyond the grave we shall wonder, it may be, how men could possibly forget God as they do; but here it is easy to do so. Do not forget in your daily life the terrible truth of my text: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God."

SERMON XI.

"He hath said in his heart, Tush, God hath forgotten: He hideth away His face, and He will never see it."—PSALM X. 11.

THIS psalm has been made one with the ninth in some versions of the Bible. The coincidences between the two are very remarkable. Almost throughout both, each alternate verse begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet; so that these two psalms have been called "alphabetical" psalms. The *subject* of both is the same; viz., the overthrow of the ungodly who forget and despise God, and oppress the humble and afflicted who trust in Him. (ix. 10; x. 18.) There is a connection also in their language, especially in one remarkable phrase. In Psalm ix. 10 David says, "The Lord will be a *refuge at needful times in the trouble.*" In Psalm x. 1 he asks, "Why hidest thou thyself *at needful times in the trouble?*" And both these psalms *end* in the same way—in a prayer against the prevailing of weak man against God, and with the judgment of the heathen. In Psalm ix. the psalmist declares that God *does* not forget the poor. In Psalm x. 12 he prays that God *may not* forget the poor, in

contrast with the boast of the ungodly that He *has* forgotten. And as every psalm is intended in some way, we are sure, to refer to Christ our Lord, so the very first words of this remind us of our blessed Saviour's deepest hour of agony and sorrow when, feeling the weight of the sins of the whole world lying upon Him, and His heavenly Father's face turned away for the moment from the atoning victim, He exclaimed, in the greatest anguish of soul, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" In this way we may at once apply the reference it makes to Christ our Lord. But besides this reference it is spoken first of David himself, and afterwards of all who have ever suffered unjustly in this world, and been persecuted for righteousness' sake. David himself had suffered years of persecution at Saul's hands. Saul hunted him as a partridge upon the mountains; his life was continually in danger; though twice when Saul was altogether in David's power, David would not lay a finger upon him to hurt him. No doubt his spirit was often cast down within him. He would ask himself, Why does God *allow* me to be treated in this cruel manner? and would say perhaps, "Why standest thou so far off, O Lord, and hidest thy face in the needful time of trouble?" And then he would reflect with sorrow upon the success and power of his enemies who were continually seeking his life, though he had no evil design

in his own heart against them. Nothing but God's special grace would keep him from saying, as they did, "Tush, God has forgotten: He hideth away His face, and He will never see it." Men have oftentimes been tempted to give up God when He has seemed for a long while to hide His face from them, or to leave them to the mercy of their enemies. It is one way in which the faith of some is tried and proved. We read in the history of Joseph and David very wonderful instances of faith upheld, and in the end conquering and prevailing even before the eyes of men. On the other hand, many have given way and fallen from God when troubles came upon them for God's sake. Our Lord speaks of this, in His first parable of all, as one reason why some men's souls are lost. Thus, "Some (seed) fell upon stony ground, where it had not much depth of earth: and forthwith it sprang up, because it had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away." And the explanation which He added afterwards to these words was this: "He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended." So also the Lord added at the close of His ministry these warning words: "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax

cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." The history of the early Church tells us how soon this trial of the new Faith began. Even John (or Mark) left S. Paul and his uncle Barnabas at one time to continue their dangerous mission alone, while he returned to the safety and security of his home at Jerusalem. And it is surely in deep bitterness of heart S. Paul writes in one epistle thus: "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." And even sooner than *that* we see the effort Satan made, though it was unsuccessful, to subdue S. Peter. The Lord said, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Now, what is one cause why men thus fall away into grievous sins or unbelief, and so are lost? It is simply the fact which my text states, "He hath said in his heart, Tush, God hath forgotten: He hideth away His face, and He will never see it."

Sinful men delight to say and think "God hath forgotten," or He doth not see; but God, my brethren, *never* forgets; He MAY FORGIVE, and He *does* forgive us on our true and sincere repentance; or *we* may forget our transgressions, and hide them from our own eyes, and think no more of them ourselves, but *God* never forgets. Settle this fact deep into your hearts, "God never forgets."

The great king who forgave his servant all a *great*

debt, but that servant went out and cruelly seized and imprisoned a fellow-servant for a very small debt which he owed to him, he did not forget when this occurred what he had already done for this bad man. When he had cancelled his lord's forgiveness by not acting in like manner to another, all the *old* debt was remembered, and required at his hands, and he was cast into prison till he should pay it in full, which was never likely. "So," adds our Lord, "will my heavenly Father do also unto you, *if* ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." Now, what makes a man think or say, "God has forgotten"? Simply it is want of faith. A living faith brings God before the mind at all times and in all places. By faith we know and feel that nothing happens by accident. We can by faith not only say, but really *feel*, "Thou art about my path and about my bed, and spiest out all my ways. Lo, there is not a word in my tongue, but thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether." And not only our words, brethren, but our thoughts are all known unto God. He tries the hearts and reins of every man amongst us. Our most secret thoughts are known unto Him, in darkness and in light, by sea or land. God never forgets; He *never* hideth away His face; He *always* sees, and *always* remembers us. Do you remember the case of poor Hagar in the wilderness? She was driven forth with her child into the wilderness; the bottle of water was spent, and she cast the child down

and went to a distance that she might not see him die parched and dried up with thirst. He was her last tie to earth; all hope seemed over when he was gone, and the child was at his last; yet God did not forget her. He was watching over her and her child; and He sent His angel to her, and called her by name, and opened her eyes to see a well at a distance, and so saved her life and the life of the child. So with Elijah in the wilderness. Rather than that the prophet should die in his extremity, God sent a daily supply of food by ravens, which brought it to the prophet night and morning. And so through all the history of the world. God has *never* forsaken them that trust in Him. God never forgets any of us. He may try our faith; He often does so. Even S. Paul's faith was tried when a sore affliction fell upon him, which he calls "a thorn in the flesh." It hindered his ministry, it hindered his sight, as it would appear from other passages, and perhaps his speech; at least it impeded his external power of influencing others, and he prayed for its removal; and he had to do this, not once only, but thrice; and then the answer he received was, *not* that the trial should be removed, but this, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Let us take, then, this one thought home with us afresh to-day, and carry it about with us in our daily lives: "God never forgets." No; alike the lowest and the highest, when in a crowd or alone, at sea or on land, by day

or by night, still His eye is upon *every one* of us. That poor Lazarus, who was laid daily at the rich man's door, even the dogs had pity upon his distress, though not man; nevertheless God had not forgotten him, though He had seemed to do so. When he died, God sent His angels to bear his spirit into paradise. Who might more reasonably have exclaimed: "Tush, God hath forgotten me: He hideth away His face, and He will never see me," than this Lazarus? Or, again, look at Cornelius of Cæsarea. Day by day that good man, before he had the light of Christianity, or the grace of God's Holy Spirit in his heart as we have, knelt down continually before God, and gave much alms to the poor. At last an angel appeared from heaven, and tells him that his prayers and his alms are come up as a memorial before God. God had seen them, and remembered him for them. So, I say, with every one of us, God never forgets; God always remembers. Good or bad deeds and words, secret or open, by day or night, none are forgotten; all are written down in the books before Him. He may cancel the great debt we each owe Him, He may as it were put a line through the long list of our transgressions, with a pen not dipped in ink, but in the blood of the eternal Son, but still, testifying to the magnitude of His mercies, or to our deeper guilt if His goodness be afterwards abused, there lie the imperishable records of each life amongst us from our earliest to our latest day. What a wonderful revelation will the great day

disclose! God's never forgetfulness; God's perpetual remembrance and intimate knowledge of each one of us! The books opened, and the judgment set. Let our desires, my brethren, be to remember God in some measure as He remembers us. Let us not forget *His* goodness or our transgressions. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; but if we *confess* our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." But before we can *confess* our sins, we must remember and know them; and the more *we* remember them in sorrow, the less will God remember them against us to our condemnation. It is in men's forgetting God, and so forgetting their sins, that they heap up wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Never say, then, in your heart, "Tush, God hath forgotten: He hideth away His face, and He will never see it." Never say so, but always remember that He *does* remember, that He remembers *each* of us daily, separately, individually, and distinctly, not as one of a multitude, but as intimately as though there were none else beside ourselves in the world. Let us rejoice in this faith. "He that planted the ear, shall *He* not hear? or He that *made* the eye, shall He not see?" Yes; knowing us thus, let us pray with David: "Try me, O God, and seek the ground of my heart; prove me, and examine my thoughts, and lead me in the way everlasting."

SERMON XII.

"*In the Lord put I my trust: how say ye then to my soul, that she should flee as a bird unto the hill?*"—PSALM xi. 1.

THE one prime thought of this short psalm is David's sure trust in God. Whether the thought arose within his own breast, or whether it was suggested to him by others, that he should do as Job's wife pressed upon her husband to do—give up God, his reply to all such suggestions was—"In the Lord put I my trust: how say ye then to my soul, that she should flee as a bird unto the hill?" Troubles fell thick around him, and probably were so falling upon him at the time he wrote these words; for he says here—"The wicked bend their bow, and make ready their arrows within the quiver, that they may privily shoot at them which are true of heart." It is very remarkable that this world has always hated the good, and loved the evil; but it always has been so. The world and the Church are perpetual and eternal enemies. Satan ruleth widely in this world; but Christ dwelleth in His Church. And thus darkness and light continually are opposed

to one another. If we look down the list of God's servants from the first, we find it as an *invariable* rule that the world has ever hated them in their generation, whether it be righteous Noah, or Lot "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked;" or the pure and high-minded Joseph, who was cast into prison; or Moses, who was banished from his own people for forty years, and for forty more endured their daily provocations in the wilderness; or Isaiah, or Daniel—these and all the prophets in turn have shared the hatred and contempt of the world. Men cast *them* out, of whom the world was not worthy. So our Lord says to the Jews: "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?" till at last we come to Him who was sent to be the Redeemer, and Saviour, and Restorer of all. Him they crucified and slew, and *all* His immediate followers suffered cruel persecutions at the hands of men. Still all these maintained their faith in God. Each could say with the psalmist in my text to the close of life, "In the Lord put I my trust;" and God *has* never forsaken them that trust in Him. Sorrows may fall thick around them at times, trials grievous to be borne, and divers temptations may come upon them; but all these things tend only to *strengthen* faith in them that are saved. As the apostle says, "Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope." And the Master says, "He that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved." And

this is the faith, the *only* faith, which will make a man endure unto the end—"In the *Lord* put I my trust." The Church of Christ at all periods is very like the little boat on the sea of Galilee, in which the rowers were the apostles, and the only passenger was the weary Saviour, asleep upon a pillow in the hinder part of the vessel. The sea wrought and was tempestuous; the boat made no way toward shore; the waves broke over it, it began to fill, and as it filled, to sink. In their distress the apostles awoke the Lord, and cried, "Master, save us: we perish;" or, "Carest thou not that we perish?" And His reply to them was, "O ye of little faith, wherefore did ye doubt?" and "He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm." That is a literal description of God's Church at all times. The waves of sin and of the world may surge around; they are tossed up and down; "their soul melteth away for very trouble." Oftentimes they feel in jeopardy, and all the while God may seem as though He had forgotten them. Christ the Saviour seems to be asleep, as though unconscious of their trouble; but He is *there*, and with them. They need not fear. They have but to say and feel from their hearts, "In the Lord put I my trust," and they will be safe. Nothing can harm them who serve and love God, and have Christ dwelling in them. To them "all things work together for good." God's word to us often is, "Fear not, but trust." "The Lord is in His holy

temple: the Lord's seat is in heaven: His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men." The great God liveth above; but from His throne of glory He looketh down upon us. He sees the heart of every man; He daily provides for all the wants of all. No one is beneath God's care and love; for He careth for *all*. But just as we, brethren, care most for those who *love* us, so God cares *most* for those who love Him *most*. If we can but believe this, then all things will go smoothly with us. It is the getting into our hearts an abiding feeling of this kind, which nothing can shake, "In the Lord put I my trust," which reconciles us to all that may befall us in the world, and sets our hearts at rest. We are told by S. Paul, who learnt it from Solomon, "Whom the Lord *loveth* He chasteneth." This is sometimes hard to impress upon men's hearts. Some find it difficult to accept God's ways, which are not as our ways. "The Lord *trieth* the righteous," says this psalm. Oftentimes we are slow to believe that this "trying" can be out of love to our souls; but it is so. And the secret of all this is to be found in the fact that this world is full of sin and enmity to God.

If, then, a man enjoys all good things on earth—great prosperity, continual ease, nothing to vex him—then it needs we know not *what* an amount of grace, and what years of careful training in himself, and of prayer and watchfulness, to keep that man from falling away. There are so few of us who would really love and serve

God if we met with *no* trials in life, that in His great mercy God sends these things, first upon one, and then upon another amongst us. It is out of *love* to us that He does so—to draw our love off from earth and its pleasures and pursuits, and fix it upon Him who, though unseen by us, is ever near, and sees us through and through. If a man loves not God in times of trouble, he would be almost *sure* not to do so in times of prosperity in all things. But think, my brethren, how comforting, how re-assuring it is to our hearts to be able to say and feel with David, *whatever* happens to ourselves, or those dear to us, or in the world—"In the Lord put I my trust: how say ye then to my soul, that she should flee as a bird unto the hill?" "The Lord is in His holy temple: the Lord's seat is in heaven. His eyes consider the poor, and His eyelids try the children of men." This was the faith which nerved all the saints of God who had in old time to undergo fierce trials and persecutions. God never forsook *them* who trusted in Him; and if we love God with *all* our hearts, and *all* our minds, and *all* our strength, He will never forget or be wanting to us. To produce this feeling in our hearts, it may be that He has sent troubles and trials upon us. But only what is good and necessary for us will be sent upon us. The clouds soon break; the darkness soon passes away. It is always happening that "to the godly there ariseth up light in the darkness." And it is not only so with us *individually*, but it is

true to us also as a Church, and as a nation. How full of strife, and doubt, and discord seems all around us! Among ourselves men have risen up speaking perverse things; and there are thousands who vainly think to show their love to Christ by destroying, if they could, the only body in which Christ has *promised* to dwell—the Church, which is His Body—which He has made the temple of the Holy Ghost. My brethren, we need never fear for God's Church if she is but true to herself, true to her faith; if the word of God and His holy sacraments are duly administered amongst us. So long we need never fear· "The gates of hell cannot, and shall not, prevail against her." "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." Wicked men once before thought to destroy Christianity by crucifying the Lord our Head; but their deed is that in which we glory; for the cross led to the resurrection, the crown of thorns to the crown of glory in the heavens; and all power was given unto Him in heaven and in earth. How vain are all the efforts of sinful men if we are but true to this: "In the Lord put I my trust. . . . . The Lord is in His holy temple: the Lord's seat is in heaven. His eyes behold the poor: His eyelids try the children of men!" And no less true is this principle of faith and trust and security as applied to a nation as it is to a Church, or to each individual Christian amongst us. It is the secret of all national security, and prosperity, and peace. We know not what troubles

are coming upon the earth: "The foundations may be cast down." We may continue to hear of wars and rumours of wars, nation arming and rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. Still let our hearts be surely fixed on God. Let us as a nation serve God and honour God, and then we need never fear. God will ever protect His own. It was once when the boat was filling and beginning to sink, as I have said, that at one word the wind ceased, the waves became smooth, and there was a great calm. It was at another time, when the night was dark and the sea tempestuous, that in the grey dawn of the early morn the Preserver of all was seen walking majestically upon the troubled waves, and drawing nigh unto the boat. His words were then—"It is I; be not afraid." Oh that we, my brethren, as a nation, as a Church, and separately in our own individual hearts, may ever be able to say, "In the Lord put I my trust: how say ye then to my soul, that she should flee as a bird unto the hills?" Our confidence may ever rest in this—"God is in His holy temple: His seat is in heaven. His eyes behold the poor: His eyelids try the children of men." None are so poor, none so low, none so high or so great, but that God regardeth them from His throne in heaven. Our daily life is the theme of angels' pens. Our life fills up page after page of those books which are written before God. Let us try and pray that we may love Him as He loveth us. And if we *love* Him, then we

can always *trust* Him. Then He will protect our going out and our coming in; He will bring to nought all those evils which the craft and subtlety of the devil or of man worketh against us; He will carry us through all these earthly scenes into His holy temple, where "the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

SERMON XIII.

"*Help me, Lord, for there is not one godly man left: for the faithful are minished from among the children of men. They talk of vanity every one with his neighbour: they do but flatter with their lips, and dissemble in their double heart. But the Lord shall root out all deceitful lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things.*"

PSALM xii. 1–3.

THIS psalm appears to have as one of its chief objects to afford consolation to those weak in faith, who are tempted to fall away in times of trouble and ungodliness. There have been continually periods in the world when true religion has seemed almost to fail from the earth; the saints of God seem few in number, and almost to have perished from amongst men; and then love grows cold, as iniquity abounds. We all well know the history of the prophet Elijah. Few characters more strike upon our attention than his—his hard life, and rough clothing, and scant food, but his boldness and faith in rebuking Ahab and Jezebel when they had led almost the whole people to renounce God. There was a time when he seemed quite alone: all Israel seemed to have renounced God, and followed Baal. And at all

periods many persons are apt to think that what is popular in the world, and attracts people to it, and so on, must be right simply on that account. In general, however, it is exactly the reverse with true religion. Elijah felt himself to be alone in the world—he alone following God when all else had forsaken Him. "Lord," he exclaimed, "I am left alone; and they seek my life to take it away." "I only am left a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men." But God revealed to him this great source of comfort: "I have reserved to myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal." Thus we see that Elijah spake almost as the psalmist in this psalm; but received the great consolation which it holds out to all who continue faithful to God, whatever discouragements and temptations may surround them. Here David says: "Help me, Lord, for there is not one godly man left; for the faithful are minished from among the children of men." But then comes the promise: "The Lord shall root out all deceitful lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things." And again: "Now for the comfortless troubles' sake of the needy, and because of the deep sighing of the poor, I will up, saith the Lord, and will help every one from him that swelleth against him, and will set him at rest. Thou shalt keep them, O Lord: thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever." There seems to be then two things especially brought to our

minds in this psalm; one is God's sore and sure judgment upon men for the sinful words they utter; the other the special consolation which He will afford to all who remain faithful under some prevailing temptation which carries away most people with it, and threatens to draw us away from what is right, and true, and holy, and just. First, then, "The Lord will root out all deceitful lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things." Our Lord Himself tells us that one very special part of the enquiry at the last day will be respecting every man's *words*.

How little, brethren, do many of us ever think of the words we utter. They pass from our lips into the air, and their sound is soon lost, and their echo dies away in a moment. But very seldom is it so in their effects. They come forth from our hearts; for it is "out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh;" and they pass not only into the air, but continually into the hearts and minds of others. And then they act in the souls of others like the light downy seed of the thistle, which the wind blows from one field to another, there to lie for a few days or months unnoticed, and then to spring up into life and being. The seed becomes a crop. Such is just the effect oftentimes of our words. Many a soul is saved, but far more are lost only by the words which they hear fall from the lips of others. They may learn to bless God, or they may learn to curse and to swear, or to lie, simply by hearing others do the one or

the other. And what is a mere thought and word in one man, when it has passed on into another person's mind and heart, there it produces oftentimes not merely a sound, but fruit; the word is carried out into action. A mere word from our lips produces in another good or bad fruit unto the harvest of the life which never ends. No wonder, then, that our Lord so impresses upon us all a careful consideration of our *words*. "Verily I say unto you, that for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof at the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." This is how our Saviour speaks of what He calls idle words—mere useless, vain, carelessly-uttered words, without their being downright wicked and blasphemous, or defiling, or degrading, or untrue. But what must these last be if the former are so solemnly spoken of? Again, how easily do many give utterance to a lie, a falsehood. They have done wrong; but they conceal it by a lie. They have lost, injured, or broken something that belongs to another; or we will say they have gone where they were forbidden to go; or they have something to sell, and they declare that what they offer for sale has advantages which if known will promote, or has not disadvantages and defects which would hinder the sale. But it is all false and untrue. Now no sin is more strongly forbidden and denounced by God than a falsehood. In one psalm it is said: "All liars shall be

turned into hell, and all the people that forget God." And here this psalm says: "The Lord shall root out all deceitful lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things."

My brethren, we cannot surely be too often reminded that God keeps so strict an account over all our words, that each will be found recorded in the judgment-day. We may do infinite good or infinite evil simply by a few words. It is one species of that little leaven which is always at work leavening the whole lump. We may encourage a neighbour to love and fear God, or we may lead him to deny and blaspheme against God, simply by our *words*. Nay, it is one of the ways in which the *deceitfulness* of sin particularly shows itself. Our words may deceive, not only a neighbour, but even our own-selves. It was so with the Jews in our Lord's time. He said, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their lips; but their *heart* is far from me." It may be so with us. It is only by keeping watch over ourselves more and more carefully that we can find safety. If we earnestly pray to God to sanctify our hearts, and to guard them from sin and vice, then, as the blessed Spirit works in us more and more effectually, shall we be preserved from evil words, and lying, and wicked-ness. If any one be angry with us, let us endeavour never to return anger for anger, railing for railing; but as a rule, blessing for his cursing, good for his evil, love for his hatred. So did our Lord Jesus Christ, as His

chief apostle testifies thus: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." If this, then, be one special object of this psalm, to teach us how surely God will punish the sinful words of sinful men, and will root them out of His kingdom, so we are also reminded of the help and consolation which He will afford to them who resist temptations, and follow Him in truth, and love, and purity of life. Few of us know perhaps the influence which the world in which we live—that is, those with whom we chiefly associate—has over us. It requires much true sincerity of faith to stand out, as we all ought to do, against sin, and errors, and vices which perhaps generally prevail around us. Our Lord Himself says, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." That is the influence which evil has upon others. There would have been little comparative boldness in Elijah, if, instead of standing alone against the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, he had been surrounded with an equal number of prophets, like himself, of the true God. Sin, like a river as it flows along, attracts to itself all the little streams which lie along its course, and the fuller

and larger it gets, the more difficult is it to be stopped or turned aside. We are carried away by the example and influence of others. None of us like to stand alone. We think there is safety in numbers. Nay, do not many of us console ourselves by the thought that we are no worse than our neighbours, as though *their* condemnation at last would either save us from ruin, or console us in our own sufferings; and so it is that few people (says our Lord) find and love the narrow path and the strait gate, which leadeth unto life; the many take the broad way, and enter in by the wide gate, which leadeth unto destruction. In some way, depend upon it, my brethren, we must all *stand out* in opposition to the world. The very fact of our being, or being thought, in no way different from all the rest of men around us, should make us search into our state and position in God's sight. Abraham had to rise up and leave his native land, and his father's house; Joseph had to suffer imprisonment rather than do a great wickedness, and sin against God; Moses had to give up the king's court, and reject from himself being called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Samuel had to live in the temple, and serve at God's altar from his tenderest years; Daniel had to pass through the lions' den to his exaltation; the three young men had to pass through the fiery furnace; and so of all God's saints. To go *with* the world is to perish. In some way we must each bear our witness against it, that the works

thereof are evil. But it is in these ways that the righteous find their consolation. As this psalm says, "I will up, saith the Lord, and will help every one from him that swelleth against him, and will set him at rest. . . . Thou shalt keep them, O Lord: thou shalt preserve him from this genertion for ever." Let us, then, my brethren, try to find out to the full God's will and God's commandments; and let us with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, endeavour to fulfil that will and keep those commandments. If we took no other thought away with us to-day, let it be that we will endeavour so to guard our tongues and guide our words, that we may not only avoid doing evil, but may always be doing *good* by them. The tongue is a little member in the body; but S. James compares it to the very small helm by which large ships are turned about in the open sea at the will of the helmsman. With the same tongue men can bless God, but curse one another. They may inspire good actions, good thoughts, good desires in others, or they may by their words do the devil's part of misleading and tempting others on into sin. How blessed, if we can feel and say, "I will sing and give praise with the best member that I have." "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; and keep the door of my lips. O let not mine heart be inclined to any evil thing."

SERMON XIV.

"I will sing of the Lord, because He hath dealt so lovingly with me."
PSALM xiii. 6.

THIS psalm, like many others, begins in sorrow, but ends in joy. In all God's works there is a great likeness running throughout—a change from bad to good, from hope deferred to real enjoyment; as the proverb has it, "No cross, no crown." Thus it is that daylight succeeds the darkness of night, and disperses it. Health and strength follow so often after a bed of sickness, inward joy after a long period of outward sorrow. Our Lord Himself "went not after joy; but first He suffered pain." And such is the life's history of all God's most chosen saints.

We read how Abraham had to leave his native land, and sojourn in a strange country, and had the one supreme trial of his faith in the sacrifice of Isaac. We read how Joseph was tried by temptation, and then by imprisonment; how "his feet were hurt in the stocks, and the iron entered into his soul," before the hour of his exaltation and usefulness arrived. Moses, too, lived for forty years as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and

for forty more served as a shepherd to a foreigner in a strange land, before he became the captain of God's people, and brought them out of Egypt, after he had shown and done great wonders in that land. And all this is true, even of the greatest of all in human form, our Lord Jesus Christ. He lived for thirty years unknown and shorn of all His majesty before He began to exercise and show forth His divine mission; and then for those three years He endured the contradiction of all men. He seemed to wait in vain for the hearts of men to turn to Him, and acknowledge Him as the Lord of all; their power and opposition to Him and His humiliation culminated in the cross and grave; the resurrection followed, and then all mists dispersed; men and angels acknowledged Jesus Christ risen from the dead as the Lord of all power and might. Thus it is just so that this psalm begins, I say, with the plaintive words, "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, for ever: how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I seek counsel in my soul, and be so vexed in my heart? . . . . Consider, and hear me, O Lord my God: lighten mine eyes, that I sleep not in death." But all this is changed in the two last verses, where it is writen, "My trust is in thy mercy: and my heart is joyful in thy salvation. I will sing of the Lord, because He hath dealt so lovingly with me: yea, I will praise the name of the Lord most highest." And this, dear brethren, is, I am sure, our own experience

in life the longer we live and can look back and feel our hearts turned more and more unto the Lord, and to Christ as our Saviour. He may deal with us for months or years, like blind Bartimæus sitting by the roadside as Jesus passed by, and crying out, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me;" but receiving no encouragement from the Lord, and only rebuked by the crowd around him, telling him to hold his peace, but he persevered, and so was restored to sight. So it was with the lepers who stood afar off. So it was with the woman of Sidon, the Syrophenician by nation. These all waited in fear and hope—persevering and not despairing. At first their cry was, as it were, "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, for ever?" At last they felt and said, "My trust is in thy mercy. I will sing of the Lord, because He hath dealt so lovingly with me." Think how differently a man goes through the world who dwells upon the *blessings* he has received more than the *sorrows* and trials he may have undergone, who tries to see in all circumstances of his life God's goodness towards himself, instead of repining continually in discontent at everything which crosses His will or his hopes. It is in this way that God so often draws the hearts of men to Himself, weans them from the love of this world, and makes them to love Him supremely before all else, and thus sows the seed of eternal life in their hearts. It requires great grace from God to make any of us to love Him with all our hearts, when all around us is

calculated to make us rather love this world than to love God. So our Lord gives one special portion of His first parable of all to the seed sown in stony ground, which springeth up as soon as it is sown, but as soon withereth away. "These are they which are sown among thorns, such as hear the word; and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful." And so God, who knoweth the hearts of all of us, very often deprives us of these outward temptations in one way or other, that Christians may learn to love Him and live for Him; and when they have learnt this as a habit, very often He gives them all that He has before denied them in life.

My brethren, we are all of us surrounded by a thousand blessings of which we take little or no account; but we should try more and more to feel and know this, and to recognize God's goodness and care for us individually in all that He gives us, and in all that He may take away from us. Try to feel and to say to Him more and more, "I will sing of the Lord, because He hath dealt so lovingly with me." These words contain a direct expression of our own individual blessings and mercies. We do not speak of ourselves as one of a crowd, as one with a number of others, as one in general, but as one in particular. And this is the true and sure result of our hearts being turned unto God. Do we not often hear people saying, "I am no worse

than others are;" or, "I have only done as others do;" or, "I am sure they are worse than I am;" and so forth. In sin we like to associate ourselves with others, whereas holiness places us more and more by ourselves in the sight of God. Separately we are born, separately we live our individual life, separately we die, and one by one we shall all separately stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. It is that which is so wonderful for the soul to realize, but is so full of comfort to them who wish to love God and to live unto Him. He never regards them in a general way; and they feel this. They know that His eye is upon them, that the smallest act or incident in their daily life is by His direction, permission, and providence. And the more a man is sensible of this, the more will he say and feel exactly as the psalmist expresses it here: "I will sing of the Lord, because He hath dealt so lovingly with *me*."

It is the work of God's Holy Spirit in us to shed abroad in our hearts the love of God. And when we love God, we love all that belongs to God. It is not the part of love to say, How little can I do to please Him whom I love? but, How can I do more? how can I do most? "I was glad when they said unto me, We will go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand in thy gates, O Jerusalem." Yes, my brethren, one very sure test of your love to God will be in your loving God's house, the service, the praise, the adoration of God; and one very sure help to this love will be your sense

that God "has dealt so lovingly" with you. Let this, then, be one object of our daily life, to see more and more God's love towards us. It gives more than contentment—it gives rest, and peace, and joy, such as the world never gives, nor can ever take away. It comes like that ray of light shed upon S. Peter in the night before he was to suffer. It inspired the tongue and heart of Paul and Silas in prison at midnight, smarting with the stripes they had received, still to sing praises to God, who they felt had "dealt so lovingly with them." Is this as yet the feeling and assurance of our own hearts? It ought to be; and we must pray and strive to make it so. One great means to this is, never to think any little thing too small to be referred to God. The whole life of all of us is made up chiefly of little things. It is only now and then that they are ever marked by greater or unusual events. These let us thankfully trace back, and give back to God. He is for ever our God, and we are for ever His people, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Nothing but sin can ever separate us from God's love—no outward circumstances, nothing present or to come, nothing but our own wilful turning away from Him. From this let us pray Him to keep us free; and then come trouble, or come joy, dark days of sorrow, or the bright and sunny days of prosperity in all things, still in all alike shall we be able to say and to feel in truth, "I will sing of the Lord, because He hath dealt so lovingly with me."

SERMON XV.

"*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*"—PSALM xiv. 1.

THIS psalm may be divided into three parts. The first part contains only this first verse, the third part only the last verse, and all that lies between forms the other division. This first verse describes the *cause* of all the evil which the next verses up to the last set forth. The last verse describes the promised deliverance from sin and death which we Christians have the blessing of seeing and partaking of through Jesus Christ our Lord. We should remark also that this psalm and the fifty-third are *almost* identical throughout. They begin with these same words: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." They both describe the miseries which follow, and they both end with the same expression of hope of deliverance to come, "when Jacob should rejoice, and Israel (God's people) should be right glad." Now let us remember that in holy Scripture the term "fool" is applied almost always to denote those who live in sin and unbelief, and deny God; and on the other hand, that "wisdom" is applied in Scripture only to denote the fear, and love, and knowledge of God; so that in Scripture language

"the wise man" is very much the same as the godly man, and "the fool" as the sinful and unbelieving. And indeed we must all see and feel that the true spring and source of every sin lie in the secret or open denial of God. "The fool or ungodly man hath said in his heart, There is no God." You will see it is said "*in his heart;*" *i.e.* this wickedness and denial of God need *not* be necessarily expressed by the mouth. Indeed it has been very much questioned whether any one ever has really and sincerely believed and felt that "there is no God." The proofs of God's wisdom and power in and over all the world, the proofs of His daily care and providence over each of us individually, are so plain and irresistible, that actually to deny God is impossible to any reflecting mind. But though men cannot actually do this, yet *practically* they do it: "The fool says *in his heart*, There is no God." Many a man puts away from himself the thought of God; many a man lives as though there were no God; many a man hates the thought of God—*wishes* there were no God, and defies His laws and threatened judgments. And all this may go on in him for all the little time of his earthly life; but the hour is sure to come when a voice from heaven says: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee!" and then, and after then, if never before, the ungodly man ever finds the sad consequences of his sinful life. In the day of judgment the most lawless and hardened sinner will be obliged to own God's

power, and the justice of that sentence which, for rejecting God's love while on earth, he is then *obliged* to submit to. The secret of all sin lies in a man's hiding his eyes from God, and saying *in his heart* "there is no God." While the great security against all sin lies, my brethren, in the conscious acknowledgment that God is everywhere present, and sees us through and through, and that He loves us for His Son's sake, and watches over every one of us for our good, and knows our most secret thoughts, and hears our every word, and desires our good here, and our final salvation hereafter.

But there is another interpretation of these first words of this psalm which gives them a still more Christian sense even than this; for the same words which are here translated, "There is no God," may *equally well* be translated, "*He* is *not* God," and thus applied to Christ our Lord, as all the psalms may be, this at once describes the sin of the Jews in rejecting and crucifying the Lord Jesus, which brought upon them all the terrible miseries which the after verses of this psalm set forth. The Jews resisted and rejected that great fundamental truth of Christianity, that God Himself in the person of the only-begotten Son was come down from heaven, and had taken our flesh upon Him. This was the great stumbling-block against which they fell. This is the great miracle of God's love which they refused to believe. They were ready at one time to stone the Saviour, because (as they said) "Thou, being a man, makest thy-

self God." At another time we read, "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, *making Himself equal* with God." At another time they said, "If this man were a prophet, He would have known what manner of person this is." At another time the poor blind man who was healed from his birth-affliction was cast out because he said, "If this man were not of God, He could do nothing." But most of all is this fact seen in the Saviour's condemnation to death. Directly He was adjured by the high priest to say whether He were the Son of God or not, He replied, "Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God. Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And He said unto them, Ye say *that* I am;" and they all condemned Him to be guilty of death. Then again before Pilate this same truth came out in an equally remarkable manner. "The Jews answered him (Pilate), We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He *made Himself the Son of God.*" Thus, you see, without adding to these proofs, that throughout the great truth which the Jews so obstinately resisted, in spite of all the Lord's wonderful miracles which proved His divine power, and were done before their eyes, that great truth which they rejected and refused to believe was the very one which we most thankfully acknowledge and build our hopes of salvation upon; viz., that God has sent His own

Son, the eternal Lord, the Creator of all things, in our flesh, to be our Redeemer, our Saviour, our Guide, our Sacrifice for all sin, our King and Lord. The unbelieving Jews said, "He is not God." We say, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and wisdom, and honour, and glory for ever and ever."

And thus it was, my brethren, that, as Pharaoh's denial of God led to *his* destruction, and the ruin of all the land of Egypt; and again, as Sennacherib denied God, and so was destroyed, with all the hosts he had brought against Jerusalem, so with the Jews, their rejection of Christ brought upon them that rejection of the once chosen people which rests upon them to this hour, and will do so until they believe in Him, and the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

"They are all corrupt, and become abominable in their doings: there is none that doeth good, no, not one. The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that would understand, and seek after God. But they are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become abominable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one. . . . Destruction and unhappiness is in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes." Thus it is that this psalm speaks of the *consequence* of rejecting God, and more especially, as I have said, of any one rejecting Christ as his Lord and Saviour. It is the secret spring of all sin and

misery in the world. God never gives us up until we have rejected Him. Nay, He bears long with us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come unto Him and be saved. But when once we have openly rejected Him from ourselves, and His grace has ceased to strive in our hearts, then follow all the sorrows and vices which afflict or disgrace mankind. The Jew to this hour is suffering the consequences of his forefathers saying of Christ, "He is not God;" "We have no king but Cæsar;" "Not this man, but Barabbas." But though we see these things, and have them for our warning and example, yet to many of us their use, it may be, is forgotten and lost. The secret beginnings of any grievous sin are almost always imperceptible, or nearly so, at the first. Satan would have but few followers and subjects to what he has, if his worst efforts were put forth against us at our *first* temptation. But it is not so. The beginnings of sin are always small. Our first grievous sin is generally a trifle compared to our last. Our safety lies in resisting our temptations from the first. Oh that all, especially the young, could see and feel this! A mere thought of sin indulged for a moment; a mere passing word which fell from our lips, and was forgotten by all but God; some little duty once given up; some little act of disobedience to our parents and teachers once done; some short prayer once omitted, but less thought of on the next occasion—with any of us such little things grow

by degrees into far greater and more deadly sins. Grace works in us less and less as we give way to temptation; sin becomes easier; resistance to it becomes more difficult and less possible; and so it is that many a one goes *down* the hill of life, and becomes less conscious of his state as he keeps in the broad path, which has no stumbling-blocks in it, as the narrow way of life has to all. Well now, my brethren, what is our security or recovery from such a state as this? "If the fool says in his heart, There is no God," or of Christ, "He is not God," our safety and happiness lie in doing exactly the reverse. First of all, we should try to feel and encourage in ourselves a sense of God's presence everywhere; that His eye sees us; that He reads all our thoughts, and knows our hearts every moment we live; and that He loves us as a father loves his children. We should seek to acquire that true feeling which the psalmist thus describes: "Lord, thou hast searched me out, and known me: thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising; thou understandest my thoughts long before. Thou art about my path, and about my bed: and spiest out all my ways. For, lo, there is not a word in my tongue: but thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether." Instead of saying with the fool, "There is no God," try to feel and to find that God is indeed everywhere; and not only everywhere in an indefinite sense, but with a personal and most intimate reference to your own self individually. This is the one first step

towards preservation from sin, or recovery of holiness. But then to this we must add the other great Christian truth, that God has sent His eternal and glorious Son in our flesh, to be our Saviour, our salvation, our atonement for sin. We may each say, Christ my King died for *me*. His blood was shed on the cross as truly for *me* as though there had been no one else for Him to save besides myself. For if this love of His does not beget love towards Him, nothing else will. And if thus we can once feel our hearts filled with this love, then, my brethren, His commandments are not grievous. Our *delight* will be to do God's will; our happiness will be to return His love by bringing forth in our own lives and conversation all those fruits of faith which are to the praise and glory of God. And let us remember that as the greatest sin of all was the rejection of Christ, "the fool saying in his heart, He is not God," so the first step in the Christian life is to acknowledge that the Son of man was and is the Son of God. "Herein is love, that God died for man. Herein is atonement; for only God could atone for sin, for no man may deliver his brother. Herein is our salvation; for as He had power to *merit* our salvation, so has He power to *confer* it also on all them that believe and obey the truth. Herein is our hope in the day of judgment, that the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father."

SERMON XVI.

"*Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle, or who shall rest upon thy holy hill? Even he that leadeth an uncorrupt life, and doeth the thing that is right, and speaketh the truth from his heart. He that hath used no deceit in his tongue, nor done evil to his neighbour, and hath not slandered his neighbour. He that setteth not by himself, but is lowly in his own eyes, and maketh much of them that fear the Lord.*"

PSALM XV. 1-4.

THE six psalms that precede this psalm have been describing the character and fate of the wicked. This, however, does exactly the reverse; it describes the character and conduct and final blessedness of the righteous and godly. "It appears to have been composed by David after the ark had been brought to mount Sion, in order that he might put the people of Jerusalem, and specially the priests and Levites (whose daily duty it was to attend to the service of God in the sanctuary), in remembrance of that holiness and blamelessness of life which was required in them who were thus brought so near to God." And so, brethren, it describes to us in our day the grace and holiness which God seeks for in all who draw near to worship Him in His church on earth, and without which none will be

allowed to dwell with Him hereafter in His temple and kingdom in heaven. For this reason this psalm is one of those appointed for Ascension-day; because as He Who has alone ascended yet into the heavens fulfilled all righteousness, and was perfect in all that this psalm proclaims, so must they strive to become more and more holy and like unto God who would desire or may hope to share in His glory, and to have a place in the blessed kingdom of their Lord. You will remember, perhaps, how fearful an instance of God's severity on them who approach Him improperly had been given but a few months before this removal of the ark to mount Sion in the punishment inflicted upon Uzzah, for an act of irreverence, though to us his act would appear to have been well-intentioned. For we read in 2 Samuel vi. "that when they came (with the ark) to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God. . . . And David was afraid of the Lord that day, and said, How shall the ark of the Lord come to me?" A few months after this, however, the ark was removed to mount Sion; and we read, "And they brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in His place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it: and David offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings unto the Lord." And when

this was doing or done, then it would seem that this psalm, which had been composed for the occasion, was sung, and it may be was written up in some conspicuous place along the road which led up mount Sion. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall rest upon thy holy hill? Even he" (is the first answer) "that leadeth an uncorrupt life, and doeth the thing which is right, and speaketh the truth from his heart." Now, by "leading an uncorrupt life," we must principally understand two things; viz., first, the abstaining from all worship of idols and images, which has ever been most corrupt and offensive in God's sight; and, secondly, the abstaining from all those sins of the flesh which war against the soul, but are so common among men. These may be said to be the two great sources of *corruption* in the world, the one to the soul, the other to the body; one defiles the soul, the other the body. Both will exclude the unrepentant sinner from having any portion in God's kingdom in heaven. And though it is true that happily we may be at the present moment under no danger of the former source of corruption, viz., the worship of images and idols, yet even that has ere now prevailed in some parts of Christ's Church; but of the other chief source of corruption there is no more prevalent form of evil in our own day than it, none which the world less ranks amongst "deadly sins," as they are rightly termed in our litany, none which I believe is more productive of misery and unhappiness

and of eternal condemnation to the souls of men and women.

But this is not enough. *To abstain from evil* is only a part of what God expects of all of us. Besides sins of commission, that is, violations of His laws, we may daily be guilty of sins of omission. And they who escape direct acts of guilt, and vice, and transgression of God's laws, may yet be leading a vain, useless, and unprofitable life in the eyes of Him who has redeemed us unto Himself to be "a peculiar people, zealous of good works." And so, after saying "he that leadeth an uncorrupt life," the psalmist goes on to say, "and *doeth* the thing that is right." It will avail us little enough, or rather I should say avail still more to our condemnation in the judgment-day, to have possessed a knowledge of the truth without having followed it in our daily life. It is not enough (says our Lord) that we *call* Him "Lord, Lord, if we DO not the things that He saith." Thus He has told us in one parable how the unprofitable servant who traded not with his lord's money, but kept it carefully wrapt up in a napkin, was condemned to utter destruction only for this, that he neglected to use the gift entrusted to him.

It would be endless to multiply passages from our Bible to the same effect. There is nothing more sure in Christian doctrine than that God has redeemed us unto Himself by the blood of His dear Son, and has given us the gift of the Holy Ghost the Comforter—all

this not that we should be idle and unprofitable servants in His kingdom, but be ever striving to be more and more like unto Him, and to please Him well in all things. But still further, says the psalmist in his description of the godly who shall enter into God's rest, he must "speak the truth from his heart." We all know how often this rule is broken by many persons without the least remorse or concern. Truth is often forgotten, or infringed upon, or broken, on the most trivial occasions. Both men and women, young and old, think it no sin to frame *false* excuses, to overstate and understate facts, to exaggerate or the reverse what they have to relate, to deny they have done something which is found fault with, or, on the other hand, to take credit to themselves for some good which does not rightfully belong to them. All this may go on with every apparent attention to their religious duties and the service of God. Like every other habit, good or bad, after a time people become unconscious of their peculiar sin in this respect, as in any other; they are angry if they are rebuked as they deserve to be for this trifling with truth; they are annoyed at any attempt to awaken their conscience to a sense of their danger.

So secret and so universal are Satan's devices to entrap the souls of men, one in one way, and another in another, that our only safety, my brethren, lies in keeping a strict watch over ourselves in all our ways, and in continual supplication and prayer to Almighty

God for light to *know*, and for grace to *do*, such things, and only such things, as are pleasing in His sight. After this, this beautiful psalm goes on to set before us the need of openness and honesty in all our dealings with one another, of abstaining from all ill will and hatred in our hearts, and from all evil speaking of one another. It inculcates upon us the grace of humility and meekness, of love and honour to them who are the most active and consistent servants of God our Saviour; it bids us deny ourselves in our own wishes and ways for the good and benefit of others; it insists upon the due observance and fulfilment of any promise we may have made, however much it may cost us; and it warns us against that all-prevailing sin of covetousness, which is described in our Bible as "the root of all evil." And lastly, the psalm ends with this promise: "Whoso doeth these things shall never fall." I do not know if there be any one of the psalms more deserving of our careful attention than this one. It points out to us the graces and beauty of that disposition which, through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, fits God's saints to inherit His eternal kingdom. It reminds us how all this must be begun and perfected in us while we are on earth. But it concludes with the blessed assurance that in thus doing we shall never fall—"an entrance will be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

SERMON XVII.

"*Wherefore my heart was glad, and my glory rejoiced: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For why? thou shalt not leave my soul in hell; neither shalt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou shalt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is the fulness of joy; and at thy right hand there is pleasure for evermore.*"—PSALM xvi. 10-12.

THESE are some of the most remarkable words of all in the psalms, and for this reason—we have the express authority of God, by the mouth both of S. Peter and S. Paul, for saying that in them is contained the promise of the greatest of all Christian truths; viz., the resurrection of Christ. In the second chapter of the Acts, in his sermon on Whit Sunday, the feast of the Pentecost, we find S. Peter quoting these words in proof of the promise of the resurrection of Christ, and adding to them this commentary of his own: David "being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on His throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell (that is, the place of departed spirits), neither *His* flesh

did see corruption," being raised again the third day. Then we find S. Paul (as related in the thirteenth chapter of the Acts) again quoting these same words to establish the resurrection of Christ as being an old promise which was now fulfilled. And he (S. Paul) uses them to show that David did not speak these words of *himself*, but of Christ; "for David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and *saw* corruption: but He, whom God raised again, saw now corruption." Therefore we have the most express testimony of holy Scripture that we could have to the fact that these words were spoken of the resurrection of Christ a thousand years before the event itself was to take place, and so were they fulfilled. The pains and sorrows of the cross were but for a moment; "for the joy which was set before Him the Lord Jesus endured the cross, despising the shame." "His heart was glad," as the psalmist says here, "and His glory rejoiced." This fact is most clearly borne out by the evangelist S. John. The last words of chap. xvi. are these: "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but *be of good cheer;* I have overcome the world." Thus is expressed the Saviour's triumphant joy at the very moment when His terrible hour was close at hand. Then the very next verses speak of what the psalmist here describes, "My glory rejoiced;" for it is written, "These words spake Jesus,

and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee. . . . . And now, O Father, glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Surely it is very remarkable how our Lord's joy of heart comes out in the description of His last hour—"His glory rejoiced." But no less true are the next words of Him—"My flesh also shall rest in hope." My flesh—that body which He had taken of the substance of the blessed Virgin Mary His mother—that human body of flesh and blood in which the person of the eternal Son dwelt and dwells, for ever united in one Christ our Lord—that body, wearied and worn out, torn and marred more than any man's, "rested in hope." He said, "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again." It was not committed to the grave for an *uncertain* period as ours are. It rested only for the Sabbath. Its work was finished before the close of the sixth day; it rested for all the seventh; it rose again very early on the first day of the week. And as it was thus with His *body*, so was it with His human soul also. That did not remain long in the place of departed spirits. "Thou shalt not leave my soul in hell;" that is, for long separated from my body; yea, not long enough even for that body to see corruption. He died long enough to make *sure* unto all men that He *had truly* died; for that death is our atonement, our ransom, the penalty accepted by God

for all the repented of sins of men. That death *merits* the salvation of all men. It was the punishment which exhausted God's anger, and His perpetual condemnation of our race. For Him to die, that was all that was needed. "The Holy One did not see corruption." He rose from the dead, never more to die. He liveth for ever and ever. Death could not destroy Him who is the destroyer of death; corruption could not touch Him who is "the last Adam, a quickening Spirit."

And so this thought may lead us on from Him to ourselves, and our share in this text. They in whom Christ lives shall, like Him, rise to life eternal from the dead. Our resurrection to eternal life depends upon our union, our oneness with Christ in *this* life. The risen body of our Lord is the source of spiritual life in us who are His members. Because He lives, we shall live in whom He lives. This is why He is spoken of thus: "When Christ, who is our *life*, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." "I am the resurrection, and the life," saith the Lord: "he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

This same truth is continually repeated. If we would rise again in glory, Christ must live in us, and be one with us now in this life. It is not a mere union of faith in Him, which is the *condition*, not the *fact* of our union. It must be a true incorporation of us with

Him. He one with us; we one with Him. He living in us; we living in Him. This is the secret of our future resurrection to eternal life. It is only as He lives and abides in us that we shall rise to share His glory in the kingdom of the resurrection. This is, brethren, what He begins in us in our baptism, and works in us more and more as often as we receive, rightly and in faith, the sacrament of His body and blood. He is present there, and so He is our bread of life. As He says Himself in John vi., "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of *this* bread, he shall *live* for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the *life* of the world;" and again, in verse 53, "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no *life* in you. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, *hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.*" Thus you see how all spiritual life, and consequently our future resurrection in glory, are declared to result only from our union with Christ our heavenly Lord—with Him whose flesh rested in hope, because God would not leave His soul in the state of the dead, nor let His Holy One see corruption. Thus it is, my brethren, true also of us, if we are Christ's, and Christ lives in us, "Our flesh shall rest in hope." We give back to God our mortal breath, and the body in which we here live and move and have

our being is laid in due time each in his quiet grave—"Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust;" but then it is "in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Our soul departs to the place of rest and peace in Paradise, the abode of the blessed. It is no longer on earth; it is not yet in heaven; "for no man hath yet ascended into heaven, but He that came down from heaven;" not even David, who wrote these words of my text, is in heaven yet. As S. Peter tells us, his soul awaits, as we shall, the judgment-day, and the resurrection of the dead; while our body rests in the grave, and returns to the earth out of which we were taken. Our flesh shall rest in hope, if we are Christ's. "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." Jesus Christ will come again in glory from heaven, and every grave will open at the sound of His voice, and all the now silent dead around us here, and in every grave by sea or land, will arise. Their mortal bodies will be re-collected. He who made them in the beginning will re-make them. Bone will join again to bone, and the same flesh, now made new, and spiritual, and deathless, will come again; and, as Job says, "in my flesh shall I see God." The soul will return, and the body will return, no more liable to corruption, or waste, or decay; for the former things will have passed away. Not more true is it that we lie down each night, and while

asleep lose all consciousness, but again rise up and return to it all afresh, than that we who live shall die, but at last shall be changed in a moment, and restored to life and the quickened powers of an immortal state, through the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us. And then comes those last words of my text which so particularly belong to us: "Thou shalt show me the path of life: in thy presence there is fulness of joy; and at thy right hand there is pleasure for evermore." The resurrection will be the beginning of our true and glorious life. All along on earth we are compassed with infirmities; sins beset us; temptations surround us; sorrows and pains lie scattered over this world like dew upon the grass. All these things will have passed away. Christ will show us the path of life. He will lead us from the grave to heaven—from mortality into immortality. "Death will be swallowed up in victory." There will be no more pain there, no more sorrows, no more trials and difficulties, no more contest of the flesh against the Spirit, and of the Spirit against the flesh. All these things will have passed away for ever. Nothing but the fulness of joy, nothing but the pleasures—holy, pure, calm, and peaceful pleasures—which are at God's right hand for evermore. How will the few that are saved, compared to the multitudes that are lost, then thank God and Christ our Saviour, who led them on along that strait and narrow path of life! How will *they* grieve and mourn who have lost their

one only opportunity of being saved, and, when they would sacrifice all to obtain eternal life, find for the first time that it is all too late! My brethren, let it not be so with us. Let us so live *in* Christ, *for* Christ, *to* Christ in this world; and let Christ so live *in* us, that, like Him, our Lord, "our flesh may also rest in hope." Let us so walk under His guidance along the path of life, that we may have bestowed upon us that fulness of joy, those pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore.

SERMON XVIII.

"*O hold thou up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not. I have called upon thee, O God, for thou shalt hear me: incline thine ear to me, and hearken unto my words. Shew thy marvellous loving-kindness, thou that art the Saviour of them which put their trust in thee, from such as resist thy right hand. Keep me as the apple of an eye; hide me under the shadow of thy wings.*"—PSALM xvii. 5–8.

THIS psalm, like the last which we considered, seems to end with some hope and faith of thing beyond this world, and our short life in it. The last psalm ends with these words: "Thou shalt not leave my soul in hell; neither shalt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption. Thou shalt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is the fulness of joy; and at thy right hand there is pleasure for evermore." So in some measure like it, this next psalm ends with words which are well suited for a Christian's gravestone: "I shall behold thy presence in righteousness: and when I awake up after thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it." I think we shall readily see the Christian application of these concluding words, if we compare them with these words of the apostles S. Paul and S. John.

S. Paul says: "If we have been planted together in the *likeness* of His death, we shall be also in the *likeness* of His resurrection." (Romans vi.) And S. John says: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." These passages, expressive of our future glory and likeness to Christ Himself, as *He* is now, are, I say, singularly like the concluding verse of this psalm: "When I awake up *after thy likeness*, I shall be satisfied with it." But this is the last and glorious consummation of all that we desire and hope for, the end for which we have to watch, and wait, and pray, and strive for in this world. There is a long journey to be undertaken first by every one of us, a high mountain to be climbed, a rough sea to be passed over, a strait and very narrow path of life to be walked along, with pains and care required at every step. This is what the earlier verses of this psalm describe. The whole of it is an earnest prayer to God for His help and protection in this life, knowing our own weakness, and how many and various are the temptations which beset the most faithful servants of God in this lower world. But at all times it is our consolation, our strength, our assurance of hope, to look at our Lord Jesus Christ, and see how He met temptation and difficulties, how *He* overcame and triumphed. For as it was with Him, so in some measure is it with all His faithful servants. Like Him, "we must

through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God," only God does not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able to bear. Through His grace, we like our Lord are enabled to resist temptation and to conquer; and at all times God "makes all things work together for good to them that love Him." True, the Saviour was rejected by men; but was not this prayer remarkably answered in Him, "Let my sentence come forth from my presence"? At His baptism there came the voice from heaven itself, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Again, at His transfiguration, "a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, hear ye Him." So again at His crucifixion. Sinful men passed their sentence upon Him and condemned Him to death; but His innocence was proclaimed by every one of every class. Pilate again and again declares Him to be innocent—"I find no fault in Him." Judas cast down the thirty pieces of silver, saying, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the *innocent* blood." The heathen centurion declares, "Truly this was a righteous man, or was the Son of God." The penitent thief says, "*Thou* hast done nothing amiss, Lord. Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." And not only His *innocence*, but His kingdom, was proclaimed to all; for even at the head of the cross was written, in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, this title: "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews."

And if these words were so fulfilled in the person of Christ our Lord, so also were the next: "Thou hast proved and visited mine heart in the night season." We know how our Lord, whose days were mostly occupied by journeys, and teaching, and miracles, gave His *nights* to prayer and communion with God. The garden of Gethsemane is described as well known to Judas, "because Jesus ofttimes resorted thither with His disciples." There He is found by Judas on His knees, when He came with the band of men, an angel having just before been sent to strengthen Him. But the intimations of our Lord's habit of prayer by night are *frequent*, especially in S. Luke's gospel; thus the night before He called the twelve and sent them forth, He passed the whole of it in prayer to God, after the miracle of feeding the five thousand in the wilderness. He is alone upon the mountain side in prayer until, in the third watch of the night, they see Him walking upon the water and drawing nigh unto the boat. And if thus the *first* verse of this psalm and its *last* verse so expressly apply to Christ our Saviour while on earth, no less so do the after verses apply to Him which describe the rage of His enemies, and their cruel and continual persecution of Him. Their portion was (as it is here said) "in *this* world," His was not. He said, "My kingdom is *not* of this world," and to His followers He says for ever, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where the rust and moth doth corrupt,

and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth doth corrupt, and where thieves do *not* break through nor steal." And if so it was with our Lord, that He had to endure trials of faith, trials from men, trials from Satan, but overcame every one, and then had special support sent to Him from above, as in those instances I have already named—if He came to do the will of God, and did it, and having done it entered into His glory, so is it with all the faithful. We have each of us, my brethren, our own particular trials and probation in this life day by day, our own besetting sin or sins to war against and watch against, our own private difficulties or hindrances in our faith and practice; but God's grace can make us triumph over them all. We, like our Lord, may overcome, and sit down with Him in glory. It is but a short passage to pass through this life into eternal life—the life that knows no end. We are passing as it were through a short and dark tunnel, which has its one little glimmer of light at the far end to guide us on, and then we shall issue into the clear and glorious light of the cloudless and endless day. But for this little while, what need have we to pray, as here, "O hold thou up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not"? There is a broad way and a smooth road, which has no difficulties to stop and hinder us. All seems smooth and easy there. We may have many companions along *it;* we shall there

be never alone. It is simply following *our own* will in preference to God's will; it is simply the struggle of the flesh against the Spirit, till the latter ceases to strive or rule in us at all; it is simply preferring *this* world, which is seen, to that which is not seen and spiritual, reserved in heaven for them and them only that love God. What need do we all feel, I am sure, every day, if we are trying to lead a godly life, to pray thus—"Lord, hold thou up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not." "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." "Incline thine ear to me, and hearken unto my words. Show thy marvellous loving-kindness, thou that art the Saviour of them which put their trust in thee, from such as resist thy right hand. Keep me as the apple of an eye; hide me under the shadow of thy wings." It is thus that the soul learns more and more to lean upon God, to "cleave unto the Lord," to trust in God, to be assured of His protection, the more we grow in faith and in God's love. Only think for a moment of those two beautiful instances in nature which are here referred to God's providing care for what is so tender and young, and that small but most beautiful and delicate invention of the great Creator's mind—the pupil of the eye. Nothing needs more careful guarding. There is the fringe of eyelashes provided against the lightest obstacles entering the eye and injuring it; then, on the approach of any greater danger, or in sleep, when we

are not conscious, to protect this instrument of sight God has provided us with those eyelids which move so easily, and guard our eyes and give them rest. There is none of our senses which God has so fenced round to protect them from injury as the eye. It is perhaps the most valuable of all gifts; for what is this world to one who lives in perpetual darkness—who has no ray of light ever given him to cheer, and bless, and guide his way? And so God has especially guarded the eye from injury. Or, again, the next simile used by the psalmist here—"Hide me under the shadow of thy wings." We are led at once to think how the Lord spake exactly so of His own love and care for Jerusalem, "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Here our Lord expresses His earnest desire to do exactly what the psalmist prays to God for—to take him under the shadow of His wings. And thus, brethren, have we need to pray; and if we thus pray, so shall we obtain. Moses in the court of Pharaoh was safe; Joseph, though cast into prison, was safe; Daniel, cast into the lions' den, was safe—each under God's wings, each under God's special protection. And so we too are more than safe under God's protection, so long as we seek for it, and love Him with a perfect heart. Nothing can touch them for harm who have "Christ *in* them the hope of glory." Even Satan may and will try to injure or subdue them; but if we have

Christ in us, then "greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." Man cannot hurt us. When the first martyr, S. Stephen, fell under the shower of stones which took away his life, it was in that moment that he saw heaven opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God, ready to receive his departing spirit into glory, rest, and peace; and so to all of us our Lord says, "Fear not them which kill the body, but after that have no more that they can do; but I say unto you, Fear Him, who after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear *Him.*" Let us, my brethren, often use, be it in our regular prayers upon our knees, or at uncertain moments in the course of the day, such words as these—"Lord, hold thou up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not;" "Keep me as the apple of an eye: hide me under the shadow of thy wings;" and God will do so for every one of us. It never is that His arm is shortened, that it cannot save, or His ear dull of hearing; but that we, through weakness of faith, do not commit ourselves wholly into His hands with undoubting trust and love; or we pray to Him for protection and grace with moving lips, but cold and unmoving hearts. "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full," is the promise. "Ye ask, but receive *not*, because ye ask amiss," is the testimony of an apostle. So let us ask, and let us ask both faithfully and persistently. God's works come to pass in God's time, not in ours. Our part is

to pray, and *to wait;* to watch, and be *patient.* The disciples had toiled on through many hours before they heard the voice they knew so well, saying, "It is I, be not afraid." So let us say again and again—again to-morrow, next month, next year—"O hold thou up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not. I have called upon thee, O God, for thou shalt hear me: incline thine ear to me, and hearken unto my words. Shew thy marvellous loving-kindness, thou that art the Saviour of them which put their trust in thee, from such as resist thy right hand. Keep me as the apple of an eye: hide me under the shadow of thy wings."

SERMON XIX.

"The Lord my God shall make my darkness to be light."
PSALM xviii. 28.

WE have no less than three versions of the whole of this 18th psalm. There is the one in the usual place in our Bible; the one in our Prayer-book; and besides this, 2 Samuel xxii. is this psalm. We are told it was composed by David after God had delivered him out of the hand of Saul; but there are many passages in it which we cannot anyhow apply to the history of David. There seems to be a reference in this, as in so many other psalms, to the earlier history of God's deliverance of Israel, and their miraculous sojourn in the barren wilderness; and clearly also it looks *forward* to the triumph of Christ, and the glory which should be revealed in and through Him. One verse in particular is quoted by S. Paul in Romans xv. in proof of God's design to call us Gentiles into covenant with him. It is here written, "For this cause I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the Gentiles, and sing praises unto thy name." And this can in no

way be interpreted as belonging to David, but only to Christ, in whom we have obtained salvation, as S. Paul declares to the Athenians—"The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth *all* men everywhere to repent: because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead." If we look attentively through this psalm we shall find many very striking passages in it—passages which, though the idea of some may have been taken from the events in the wilderness, such as the giving of the law from mount Sinai amid the fire, and lightning, and thunder, which awed the Israelites, or the smiting of the rock which gushed out with water, yet are clearly applicable to the personal history of our Lord Jesus Christ and His future coming in glory to judge the world. Bishop Horne says in his commentary on this psalm, "An application is made of the whole psalm to the sufferings, resurrection, righteousness, and conquests of Christ, to the destruction of the Jews, and the conversion of the Gentiles. In a word, the psalm, it is apprehended, should now be considered as a glorious triumphal hymn to be sung by the Church risen and victorious in Christ her Head." And in this way it is that so much of it may be found to apply to ourselves, and what part more so than the few words I have chosen for my text—"The Lord my

God shall make my darkness to be light"? If we apply these words to Christ our Lord, we see that they were fulfilled, and are still more *to be* fulfilled. He who was born in the *darkness* of Christmas night, in the stable of Bethlehem, came to be "the light of the world"—"the light which lighteneth every man which cometh into the world." He was the Sun of righteousness rising upon the darkness which had shrouded the whole earth for so long, and "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." His own dark life, passed in poverty and obscurity, was terminated by that seizure by night in the garden of Gethsemane, and that trial before it was yet day, and when at noontide for three hours the sun hid His face, and "there was darkness over all the land from the sixth to the ninth hour." Then this was followed by the darkness of the grave, in that new tomb hewn out of the rock. But "the Lord my God shall make my darkness to be light." Easter morn, at its first streak of light, saw death vanquished, and the Son of God risen from the dead, never again to return to corruption, but to reign for ever and ever in glory—"in the light which no man can approach unto," "whom no man hath seen, nor can see, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." Thus it was fulfilled in Him our Head—"The Lord my God shall make my darkness to be light."

And no less true, my brethren, is it fulfilled in various ways in each of us who are truly God's people.

God seldom works His works rapidly and suddenly. The usual order of His doings in providence and nature, as well as in grace, is to work silently, surely, and almost imperceptibly: "First the blade, then the ear, afterwards the full corn in the ear."

How very gradual, and how very slow, has been the progress of the gospel as a whole in the earth. There is still the old promise of the prophet sounding in our ears, that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea;" yet in this nineteenth century in which we live, since the redemption of man, how few are Christians in number compared to the heathen! How small a portion of the world has the true light of Christ's gospel and Christ's grace shining upon it! Yet "the Lord my God *shall* make my darkness to be light." Yes, we may live and work in hope of this. Let us do *our* part, brethren, our best, for Christ in the world. His truth will prevail *in the end;* all who reject it will be cast out; all who receive it into their hearts shall indeed see the light, and know the truth that it is of God. The sun takes many hours to run its course; the trees remain for many months cold and bare before the first shoots of spring, and afterwards the perfection of their foliage begins to appear; and we ourselves are many years attaining to the full measure of our strength and powers of mind and body. Still, this is gradually done in each of us. And so does God work in the great

spiritual world of men's souls—calling here one, and there another—by rules which are past our finding out or tracing. Still let us each work for Christ in the world, and pray that His kingdom come. This is the end we have surely in view—"The Lord my God shall make my darkness to be light."

And if, brethren, the spread of the truth is slow in the world, as we count slowness by the short measure of our human capacities and calculations; if the darkness of sin and unbelief is slow to give way, and the light of truth is slow to appear, and men seem to draw back rather than to flock, as we might well have supposed they would have done, to the salvation offered and promised to all who will seek it through our Lord Jesus Christ, no less both slow and sure is the progress and growth of *our own* spiritual capacities and powers.

We are each of us changing from day to day. We do not notice the alteration in ourselves, nor perhaps does any one observe it in us or for us, certainly not accurately. Still, taking the case of every one of us who is living under the influence of divine grace in ever so small a degree, it is true of us, "The Lord my God shall make my darkness to be light." The leaven is at work; the salt is spreading its savour. If we compare our knowledge of God and of God's truth with what we remember to have had in our childhood's days, if we compare our present knowledge and dread of sin with what we once possessed, I am sure we shall see at

once how much the light has dawned in upon us, how many things we have learnt which we once knew nothing of, how much we have grown in grace and power, in light and knowledge. Sometimes, perhaps, we take up our Bible, and in some passage which falls under our eye we find a new meaning and a fulness of expression which never struck upon our minds before. Or we kneel down to our prayers, and perhaps in them is shown to us, as was so clearly done to Cornelius at Cæsarea, some manifest fulfilment of our long-continued supplications and prayers which had never shown itself to our hearts before. Or we have fallen under some sickness or other misfortune, and after a time, though not at first, are able to exclaim, like the psalmist of old, "It is good for me that I have been in trouble; for now have I kept thy law." Or we may have been for years in the habit of coming, as every true Christian ought who loves our Lord Jesus Christ, to the blessed sacrament which He Himself instituted for our life and growth in grace, yet never till now have we found or known the full blessedness of that nearness and unity with Christ which is there bestowed upon all who come in faith.

These, my brethren, and a thousand other ways, and in a thousand varieties of degree, are all instances of God's fulfilment to ourselves of these words of my text, "The Lord my God shall make my darkness to be light." God shows us grace and the workings of His grace in

our own hearts in a way far above and beyond anything that we formerly experienced. Or, again, He shows us sins—sins to which we may be prone, of which we formerly took no account, or the exceeding misery of sin in that it separates the soul from God, all in a way far superior to our former consciousness. And in this way, too, He has been, and is still, casting light upon us and around us, just as my text says, "The Lord my God shall make my darkness to be light." So that it is continually true of us, and we find it to be so even in this dark world. But, oh, what are all these advances in light at best compared to the great dispersion of darkness and shedding forth of light for which we look and wait! Here we see through a glass darkly, hereafter we shall see face to face; here we know only in part, hereafter we shall know even as also we are known. It is not as if this our present state were to last for ever. We have something far higher, far better, to look forward to, to wish for, and to hope for. Things which the mind of man cannot here conceive, things which our tongues cannot now express, are laid up in store for them that truly love God through this short period of our mortal life. Then indeed it will be true to the full in them that are God's—"The Lord my God shall make my darkness to be light." We cannot here do more than believe in God, and love Him; there we shall see Him as He is. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Here we can only think

of Christ our Saviour as He appeared to the eyes of those who saw Him and left us the records which we have of Him; there we shall see Him in that ineffable glory which is His own by right as the Lord of all lords, and King of all kings, His face shining as the sun, and His raiment whiter than the light. Here we are surrounded by sin; and our own faith has its trials. We have to be proved "like as silver which is tried and purified seven times in the fire." There all sin will be cast out, and all who offend. The sinner and his sin will be banished for ever. It will be God's kingdom, and only God's people in that kingdom. No temptation there, no fear of falling, no darkness, no night. As S. John saw in the Revelation, and says: "And I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no *need* of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." We cannot picture to ourselves the glory of that kingdom which is in store for the saints of God when all shadows shall have departed, and nothing be there but God, and they that are God's—when "the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father," borrowing their light from Christ, who is the true light, each one shining in his own immortality of brightness; for "as one star *differeth* from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead."

And all this, my brethren, is beginning or is prevented

in every one of us in and by the little daily, passing, soon-forgotten, soon-obliterated events of our earthly life. We walk in darkness; but if we walk by faith, the darkness has no fears for us. Faith makes us see God, though as yet He is hidden from our eyes; and we hear His words, though those words are written, and not spoken in our ears. We know that He is in us, around us, and about us, guiding our footsteps, influencing our hearts, lifting us up as often as we fall. We find a silver cord let down from heaven; we find a heavenly hand to guide us; we feel the breathings of the Spirit, though, like the wind, it comes and goes we know not how; we find a present Saviour in His word, in our prayers, but above all in those consecrated elements of bread and wine at His table, which are His body and blood; and while we can so believe and feel, we find ever more and more how true it is, how true it will still be, "The Lord my God shall make my darkness to be light."

SERMON XX.

"*In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun.*"—PSALM xix. 5.

PROBABLY from this fifth verse, more than from any other, it is that this psalm has been selected as one of the special psalms to be used on Christmas-day. S. John says, at the beginning of his gospel, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us." Now this word "dwelt" would be really more strictly translated "tabernacled" amongst us; *i.e.* made our human flesh a tent or dwelling-place for the person of the eternal Son to dwell in.

This psalm will properly be divided into three parts. There are, first, the first six verses in which God's works and His glory in creation are set forth. Then there are the next five verses in which God's *will* is spoken of as revealed to us by His word; *i.e.* by Christ the Word, and by the Holy Scriptures, which are the revealed word of God. And, thirdly, there is the beautiful prayer and meditation which the psalmist was led to by thus dwelling upon God's works in creation and redemption.

To-day we will attend only to the first part: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handy-work. One day telleth another; and one night certifieth another. No speech, no words; their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun, which cometh forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a giant to run his course." We all remember, I suppose, at the beginning of our Bible, how the work of creation is described to us there. The first created thing was light. "God said, Let there be light" (or rather "light be"), "and there was light" (or "light was"). And so beautiful and regular is the light and order of the heavens, as it is spoken of here in these first verses of Psalm xix., that even the poor ignorant heathen, who know nothing of God, always look upon the sun, and the moon, and the stars, bringing with them summer and winter, cold and heat, night and day in their regular order, as a certain proof of God's providence over the world, of His power and glory; and so they were often led to worship, not *Him* Who made and rules them, but the things themselves which are but the evidences of His love and power. And how beautifully is the silence and order which reigns in creation here expressed: "No speech, no words; their voice is not heard." When we think of the finest inventions of man's skill, we find how unable we are to construct machinery of any mag-

nitude and power which can work silently and efficiently; how soon it all wears out and requires renewing; how far from noiselessly it does its office. The ticking of a clock, the whirl of a steam-engine, the buzz and noise of a turning-machine, how far are these from working silently and perfectly; yet in God's works mighty worlds revolve round each other and revolve again. This earth moves annually round the sun, and daily round its own axis, and yet this is the true description of it: "No speech, no words; their voice is not heard." And yet their work and effect goes, as it is here said, through all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the earth. There is no part which does not share in this wonderful order and regularity of the seasons, of night and day, and so forth. When the light of the sun is leaving US, by our being turned away from it, then it is rising upon those distant worlds which lie at our feet, which then are turning towards it. Our day in England is night in Australia, and *their* day is our night.

S. Paul, however, applies this verse in Romans x. to the spread of the gospel. He says, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." And thus, no doubt, as the apostle here gives a Christian interpretation and application to the fourth verse, we shall be right in

applying the next verses particularly to Christ our Lord, and His dwelling amongst men. The Sun of righteousness rose upon the earth in many ways, as the natural sun of this world shines upon us out of his tabernacle in the heavens. How is this? First of all, as the sun is the brightest and best of all things which we behold in the world, so Christ our Lord is exalted far above all things, and is "the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body;" "angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto Him." Again, just as we cannot *look* upon the sun in its splendour, so when the Saviour's glory was revealed, as it has been more than once, as *e.g.* to the three disciples at His transfiguration, to S. Paul on the road to Damascus, and to S. John in the isle of Patmos, "His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength;" "His raiment was whiter than the light;" "a light brighter than the sun's." The moon shines by reflection from the sun, but the sun shines in its own glory; and Christ our Lord is the light itself, "the light which lighteneth every man that cometh into the world." Without the sun we can discern nothing. When we are turned away from it we are in darkness, it is night; but when we have once more turned round towards it, daylight appears. And is not this, my brethren, just the way in which the Saviour of all men is spoken of in the prophetic hymn of Zacharias? "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou

shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto His people for the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby *the Dayspring from* on high hath visited us, to give *light* to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace." By nature all men are dead in trespasses and sins. Left to ourselves, sin worketh in us, and sin only; and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death. But when Christ shines in upon our hearts, turns them to God, regenerates or renews them with His Holy Spirit, and comes to live and dwell in us, *then* all this is changed; it is like the sun appearing from behind the dark clouds, we return more and more to be made again in the image and likeness of God. The powers of sin and death are subdued, and death, which is the very penalty of our inheritance of sin, is abolished in and through Christ our Lord, who is risen from the dead, and "become the firstfruits of them that slept." For death to the true Christian is now turned into sleep, it has a morning to look forward to which is always drawing nigh, the morning of the resurrection, when "all who are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

Thus Christ is altogether in us the Sun and centre of our spiritual state. His blood is our atonement; His

death is our life; His resurrection the pledge of our own resurrection to eternal life; His Spirit the power of holiness which worketh in all them who shall be saved. It is His dwelling in us which makes our bodies the temple of God—so holy that he who defileth that temple of God, God will destroy. In every way, as the sun shining in the heavens is the source of light, and joy, and health to all things that live, clothing the fields with their verdure, and earth with her flowers, and trees with their leaves and fruit, "making the grass to grow upon the mountains, and green herb for the service of men," regulating our seasons, alternating to us night and day; so is Christ the only Sun of His Church, her all in all, her life and preservation here, her only hope for the life beyond the grave. Christ is "in us the hope of glory;" and "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." No words can exaggerate the glories of the righteous—the hopes and inheritance of Christ's people. But let us not deceive ourselves. Dead things derive no life from the brightest rays of the sun. The withered leaf feels no reviving power from the sun's shining upon it. And some things the sun's heat turns to corruption. Inanimate nature, such as stones, and iron, and wood, receive no imparted warmth or life from its hottest and brightest rays. And is it not so, brethren, with men's hearts

which are not turned unto the Lord? Christ saves us *from* our sins, not *in* them. Sinful men who love darkness rather than light, or wilfully resist the means and strivings of grace, have in them *no* hope of immortality. Even the angels which fell "are reserved in chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." How many are there on all sides of us on whose ears the message of salvation through Christ falls like the sun's rays shining upon the dry leaves of a dead bough, or upon stone-cold marble! They heed it not; they pass it by. The day of salvation rises upon them; but they work not the works of God; and so, like the sun's progress in the heavens, "the night cometh, when no man *can* work;" when all that we have to do must be *done* or must be left undone for ever, good *un*accomplished, sin submitted to and done, all go up from each of us day by day unto the reckoning; when we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, to receive back the things done in the body, whether it be good or whether it be evil. What blindness will men then think it, that they did not serve and love God while on earth! what folly and madness to have set their affections only on things earthly and perishing, to have despised the offer of salvation, and to have "crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh!" And yet, brethren, we are solemnly warned that this *will* be the case with multitudes. Indeed our Lord Himself, our Sun, who died for us, says that the way of life is narrow,

and that few find it, but that the way of destruction is broad, and its gate wide, and that many go in by it! And how still more sad is it to reflect that all this is done by each man who has the offer of salvation, but rejects it, *for himself!* The Saviour's merits reach over all. There is no limit to the efficacy and power of His atonement. As it is said here of the sun's shining, "It goeth forth from the uttermost part of the heaven, and runneth about unto the end of it again: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof;" so God declares to us by Jesus Christ that He would have *all* men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. But vain man puts this offer from him, and perishes in his sins. My brethren, it is only the grace of God, which, like the sun's rays shining on the earth, and penetrating into all the hidden recesses of the heart, that can save your souls. But this grace is yours, if you will only seek it aright, and use it when you have it. You must seek it as God would have you seek it; and you must use it when you have it, and not lay it up like the talent—wrapped up in a napkin, and buried in the earth. You must come to Christ our heavenly Lord for it in true faith. You must seek it more and more through His holy sacrament, which is the special channel of His grace; but you must be careful to use and improve in your daily life the grace so sought, and if so truly sought, so unfailingly obtained. There is no hindrance to the work of grace except in ourselves. It

is *we* who stop its effective power; it is *we* who counteract its heavenly influence. Look at the sun, of which my text speaks, shining above our heads in its radiance and glory: it "cometh forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a giant to run his course." Yet we may hide ourselves in caves and cellars where its light never reaches, or we may shut the shutters of our room, and carefully exclude the least ray of light from penetrating within. Just so we do when we turn away from God, and stop the workings of His grace; when we refuse His operations, and reject the means of grace and the offers of salvation bestowed upon us.

Let such thoughts stir up our hearts to some new love of God and of His grace. Let us yield ourselves to it; pray for it to shine in upon us, as we should pray for the warm sun of summer if the harvest was coming, but all was dark, and cold, and wintry around us. Do we not hear the same voice crying to us again and again—"Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest"? "Verily, verily I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

SERMON XXI.

"*The law of the Lord is an undefiled law, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, and giveth wisdom unto the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, and rejoice the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, and giveth light unto the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, and endureth for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is thy servant taught: and in keeping of them there is great reward.*"—PSALM xix. 7–11.

I HAVE already said that this most beautiful psalm is properly divided into three distinct parts. First, there is God's glory in creation, in the heavens, in the sun, and in the firmament, with all the blessings and joy which they cause to man. Next, there is the beauty of God's *revealed* law and will—His word in the Bible—leading us to love God, and teaching us how to please and serve Him. And then, after my text, comes the psalmist's thoughts upon himself and his shortcomings, and his need of divine grace to keep him in the narrow way which leadeth unto life. And I think, if you get these verses of my text by heart, you will agree with me that no words which we can frame could express more beautifully the effect of God's word, God's law

received into the heart of man, than they do. As it says here, "The law of the Lord is an undefiled law." It is perfect, making them perfect who keep it. It stops the natural course of sin, in which we are all prone to walk; for "it converteth the soul." It turns our hearts from the love of sin to the love of holiness, and of God. It changes a man's whole disposition, making him to love that which by nature he hates, and to hate that which he naturally loves. It is the work of the Holy Spirit within him. We cannot do it for ourselves. "It giveth light unto the simple." Not the wise in this world, not the learned, not the great intellects and master minds among the generations of men, necessarily take in and love God's law, but it is revealed to the simple and the humble-minded. Yea, little children are the *most* perfect examples we can have on earth of that disposition which fits us for heaven; for, says our Lord, "Except ye be converted, and become *as little children*, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." And so we also read: "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast *hid* these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

Then, my text continues, "The statutes of the Lord are right, and rejoice the heart." And how true this is all Christian history and experience testify! None are so happy as those who feel in themselves that they love

God, and have His grace in them, helping them to keep His commandments. To them nothing comes amiss. Even in sorrows the Christian's heart is joyful—even in tribulations they have an inward "peace which passeth all understanding." It was our Lord's promise to all who love and follow Him—"Your heart *shall* rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." But not only joy, but *light* giveth the commandment of the Lord. It shows us the way to Heaven; it teaches us divine mysteries; it shows us God's love, especially to usward, so great, so enduring, as to send His own Son from heaven for our sakes, to teach us the truth, to die for our ransom, to purchase for us pardon for the past, and the grace of His most Holy Spirit for our future strength and guidance. It shows us sin in its true character, as being hateful to God, and so to be hated by us; it teaches us how to walk along the strait and narrow path of life; it reveals to us a world beyond the grave, where for ever and ever, in inconceivable bliss, all who love and serve God faithfully in this life shall be with Him for ever and ever.

"It endureth for ever." Not like the sun, and the moon, and the stars, which are set in the firmament of heaven for a period, and speak to us of God's glory; for "the sun shall be darkened," and "the stars shall fall from heaven;" but they who love God will live for ever and ever. They will know no change, no loss, no passing away. We shall be like

the angels — ever joying in God's presence — ever young, knowing no age; partaking of God's own eternity from the breath of the Almighty Spirit, bestowed upon us through Jesus Christ for His sake. "More to be desired are they," goes on my text, "than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb;" for he who has found out the way to love God has discovered the only true riches. With the love of God in his heart, the poorest man has true riches; and without the love of God in his heart, the richest man is poor, and destitute, and miserable. Our only true treasure is that, my brethren, which we each possess on earth in having God's grace, and lay up for ourselves in the heavens, day by day adding to our store there, where no thief approacheth, where no rust corrupteth. God offers to each of you the true riches. Love them, and they will *never* fail you. You may be kings and priests unto God; you may win for yourselves a crown of glory, which fadeth not away. How very miserable that *many* of us—most of us, our Lord says—should set our hearts upon the poor, perishing things of this earth, and forget and despise this heavenly treasure—the true love of God, which enriches the heart—the true love of one another, which goes up as a sweet sacrifice acceptable before God!

Truly, then, as the psalmist says here: "More to be desired are God's ways and God's law than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey, and

the honey-comb. Moreover, by them is thy servant taught: and in keeping of them there is *great reward.*" Even the blessings, and peace, and comfort which true religion brings us in this world, is as *nothing* to its results in the life to come. There God's rewards are infinite, inconceivable, immeasurable, such as no heart has conceived, no tongue can express. They will appear and be given to the saints at the great judgment-day. As we are Christ's, so what is Christ's will be ours to share with Him. "He is not ashamed to call us brethren," and says, "Where I am, there shall my servant be also." All this we look forward to in faith, but only in faith; we cannot see it. If it were so, perhaps none would then despise the riches of God's goodness laid up in store for them that love Him. But it is not so. It is not seen. We have to gaze through the mists of this world, and pass through its perils, ever sustained by God's guiding hand, and the hope which lies before us, as the very anchor of our soul.

What I have said, brethren, will make you, I think, see the extreme beauty of these words, in which, after describing God's glory in the heavens, the psalmist speaks of His still greater glory in the word of life, the word which converteth the soul, and teaches us the way which leadeth unto everlasting life. If sin had never entered into this world, our obedience and love towards God would have been as regular and natural as the order of the heavenly bodies which move in the firmament above

our heads. There is no disorder there, because sin never enters; but here it is otherwise. We are born in sin, and by our own choice our hearts are but too often thrones for Satan, rather than temples of the Holy Ghost. Men give themselves up only too readily and willingly to follow some course which is alien to God and transgresseth His law. We have every one of us some one besetting sin, or it may be many such in us. Our temptations are seldom if ever alike, one of us with another. The very sins which surround one person are no temptations to another, who yet has some other besetting sin of a different kind. This seems to have been the very first thought which suggested itself, as we shall see, to the psalmist in the next verse of this psalm, after dwelling upon the beauty and perfection of God's law.

It is for us, my brethren, to find out each for ourselves what our own *special* temptations are, what our *besetting* sin is. Till we know this, we shall scarcely be truly on our guard, or be really earnest in our desire and effort to attain eternal life. We cannot really repent without this. And to do this we must know and meditate upon God's laws; we must love our Bible; we must remember at all times that it is God's word, that He reveals Himself in it to the simple-minded, that He repels from Himself the self-wise, the profane, and the sinful. As S. Paul says: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they

are foolishness unto him." We must have in us the renewed mind and will; we must pray to God to open our hearts, to cast the bright beams of His heavenly light into its recesses, to teach us His truth, and give us grace to pursue it. The love of God, and the keeping His commandments, come not naturally into the heart of any man. It is the work of grace, the work of God's Holy Spirit, which enlighteneth the simple, and maketh wise the prudent. But no work of grace is denied to any who seek for it earnestly, and strive to fulfil it. God gives us a power beyond our own, a power beyond Satan's power; for "greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." But we must *ask* for it; we must seek for it; and we must *use* the gift. Better for us will it be "not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after we have known it, to turn from it."

May God give us grace to love His word, His law, His commandments, and to fulfil them, to give ourselves to them, to yield ourselves to His service who gave Himself upon the cross for us. Still this will not be without a struggle. Man's heart no more bringeth forth the fruits of righteousness without care and labour on his part than the field will produce of itself wheat unto the harvest which from year to year is untilled and unsown. A man's own will must co-operate with God's will towards himself. The strength, the power, the desire to bend that will of ours to His, which is higher and better, is altogether His gift; so that He does it in

us, whatever is good, and holy, and pure, and acceptable in His sight. They are His gift to us as much as the sinews with which we labour in the fields, or the mind with which we think and act are His creation and His gift in us. But remember all gifts of grace are free to all, and therein lies our accountableness before God. We may all obtain that grace we need, if we only seek for it earnestly, and seek it aright. "It is more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." To our prayers God places no limit. He says: "Ask, and ye shall have." "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you." And still more than our thus going up to God, is God's coming down to us. He comes into the midst of us; He feeds the faithful with the bread of heaven; He gives us Himself in Holy Communion. We are thus made one with Him, and He with us. We thus live by Him here that we may live with Him hereafter for ever and ever.

SERMON XXII.

"*Who can tell how oft he offendeth: O cleanse thou me from my secret faults. Keep thy servant also from presumptuous sins, lest they get the dominion over me: so shall I be undefiled, and innocent from the great offence. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be alway acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer.*"—PSALM xix. 12–15.

THIS psalm may properly be divided into three parts, as I have before said. First, there is God's work in the firmament of the heavens, and in all this external world, which day by day shows forth His power and glory. Then there is the mention of the still greater beauties of His word, which converteth the soul, which giveth light unto the eyes, and maketh wise the humble and simple-minded. But then comes the reflection, Who does keep them? Who does observe God's law with a *perfect* heart? Who is there that by so doing is laying up in store for himself that good reward, that crown of righteousness that fadeth not away, that treasure in the heavens which never fails? Simply, no one. There is none holy but the Lord. None have kept God's laws with a *perfect* heart, un-

blamable in holiness, but He, who in our flesh came to do God's will, who alone could say, "Thy law is within my *heart.*" And then, brethren, as David had need, and had occasion to say, "Cleanse thou me from my secret faults. Keep thy servant also from presumptuous sins. Keep me innocent from the great offence," so have we. Well, you will observe at once that there are here three degrees of sin and transgression named in my text, three stages one beyond the other, each going on from bad to worse, till all hope of mercy is extinguished. There are first, it says, *secret* sins, then presumptuous sins; *i.e.* wilful sins, wilfully and knowingly done against God, and in spite of His word and the strivings of the Holy Spirit within us. And lastly, these developed into the great offence—the utter extinction of God's Spirit in us, and of God's image in the soul—God's casting off the sinner for ever, as He did Judas, because he had finally and determinately rejected Him; the Holy Spirit no longer striving to influence and guide a man.

Let us attend, then, first to the first of these three stages, "secret sins." How or when are sins "secret"? First, we may say they are secret when they are known only to God. This seems to be the special kind of secret sin intended here, because the psalmist says here, "Who can tell how oft he offendeth?" That is literally and truly the case with us all. Probably no one of us *ever* passes an hour in the day, or does one single act

of any consequence, without something of this kind attaching to it. The taint of our original sinfulness mars and marks our very *best* actions. God who knows our hearts, God who hears our words and reads our inmost thoughts, can see and mark, and doubtless does see and mark, a thousand imperfections and numberless sinful inclinations each day in every one of us, of which we ourselves take no account. There is nothing secret and hidden from Him; but much respecting our own selves is hidden from our own eyes. And thus it is well that we should continually be saying, even when special acts of sin may not rise up to our minds at the moment, "We have done those things which we ought not to have done, and we have left undone those things which we ought to have done." Thus in this way many of our offences are indeed "secret," because they are known only to God.

Again, they are secret when known to *others*, but *not* known to ourselves. How many sins and imperfections are we continually noticing in each other, which, for all that they are *so* plain to our eyes, are hidden from the persons themselves. We wonder that they can do so and so, and yet they are altogether unconscious of what is thus plain to others. And it is often the case that a man's besetting sin is that very sin which every one else, who notices him at all, observes, but the man himself is not conscious of in the least. We can none of us really know the state of our own hearts without

care and trouble being given to this end. If we do not examine ourselves continually, we shall know very little of what is going on within us and out of us. Many a sin which is observed in us by others will be hidden from our own eyes, and thus we shall make but little progress, if any, in the work of grace, in the work of subduing our own hearts to Christ, in acquiring the spiritual mind, full of faith and love, preparing us for heaven.

And yet again sins are secret in a third way, when they are known only to ourselves, but unknown to every one else but ourselves. The apostle speaks of the people of his time thus: "There are many things done of them in secret, but it is a shame to speak of them openly." Oftentimes people take the greatest possible care and pains to conceal their sins, their vices, their evil propensities, and their hidden and true motives from the eyes of the world. They would be ashamed of themselves if their life and deeds, the thoughts and intents of their hearts, were known and observed. So many do things in secret which they dare not do openly. And this is a third kind of secret sin. And yet, my brethren, what use is it to try and hide our sins? They *cannot* really be hidden; God's eye sees them. They are written down in His book by those angel hands which never tire. They will be made known to *all* at the last day. In the presence of angels and of risen men, and of God Himself, how

abashed will many of us stand at God's judgment-seat when we hear the most secret acts of our private life publicly proclaimed, as they will be, that all souls may know how true and just our sentence is. "There is nothing hid which shall not be known." Let us ever bear in mind, that though no human eye may be upon us at the moment, yet that God's eye *is* watching us. The angels are present, though our door be shut. The heavenly host, or our own special guardian-angel, is present, and cannot be shut out by darkness or secrecy of any kind. And thus it is true what S. Paul says to Timothy: "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after. Likewise also the good deeds of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise *cannot* be hid."

But then, my brethren, when either of these states has gone on in any man for some length of time, when secret sins, known only to God, or known to others as well as to God, or known to ourselves and God, but not to others—when these have passed away and go on unrepented of, uncared for, unstriven against, they develop themselves into that second state of guilt which is described in my text as "presumptuous sins;" *i.e.* sins done *in defiance* of God, sins done determinately by a positive act of the will, though the Spirit may plead with us, though we may somehow have warnings of our guilt, though, like Balaam, some check be offered to our progress, as when to him "the dumb ass speaking

with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet." I believe God *never* lets any man be at ease in his open transgressions and violations of His laws at the *outset* of a sinful course. He will stop him and reason with him, as He did in the case of Balaam and Saul, and others of whom we read. And thus it comes to pass that even those who have fallen into the greatest vice and wickedness occasionally here and there, here one and there another, are reclaimed, like the prodigal son in the parable, arising and going back to his father's house, and with a broken and contrite heart casting himself down at his father's feet, and being welcomed home.

But if, brethren, through the mercy of God, such a case *does* happen now and then, and it does happen that even the lowest of the low amongst men and women *are* recovered and restored to peace and God's love and forgiveness, still such instances are very rare compared with the thousands who perish through the next stage of vice and sin, which is here called in my text "the great offence." It is not easy for the old, dry stem of the pollard oak to put forth new branches. It is not easy for the straight and tall tree to be bent into some particular shape when we wish. It is not easy to cut through the bank of a river, and afterwards to stop the flowing of the waters we have thus carelessly let loose. *So* in the matter of indulged wilful sin. Here and there one, like the one thief on the cross, is forgiven ere it be too late; but with most it is not so. Only think how

seldom a heavy stone which is set rolling down a steep hill is stopped by anything before it reaches the bottom. There is half a chance that it may happen to be stopped; there are ten thousand chances to one that it will *not* happen. And the reason of this progress of sin being so seldom unhindered in any one who deliberately yields himself to any form of deadly sin is this, that the Spirit of God *ceases* to strive and to work in that man's heart. If a man resist the Holy Ghost, as S. Stephen speaks of the Israelites as doing, that blessed power of good in us, that *only* power of good in us, is silenced and driven from us—His power, which is always greatly increased or controlled by the freedom of our own will, is sensibly lessened by each deliberate act of opposition. His action towards us becomes like our own pouring water on a hard rock; it will not penetrate, it runs off, it cannot fertilize; and so we, finding this to be the case, *cease* to pour on the water; and God ceases in like manner to pour forth His blessed Spirit upon the man who sets his heart as a hard rock against the work of His Spirit. How often does the devil blind men's hearts into thinking that they can, at any time they please, call back to themselves the renewing power of the Spirit of God, and leads them on to think and reason with themselves thus, that there will be time enough to lead a godly *life*, when that life is evidently drawing to a close. He leads many to *risk* all their hopes of salvation to the *chances* of a last

illness, and the uncertainties of bodily and mental powers being given them even on their dying bed. Alas! how many we may believe then, when it is too late, "seek to enter in, but shall not be able." We forget the parable of the talents which so accurately describes the position of each of us in every generation. All have not the *same* gifts, or the *same* responsibilities; but all have *some* gifts and responsibility. All may do something to serve God in this world; but many bury their talent in the earth. They live for the world, they live for themselves, they live and work for anything but for God, and in the end will find that they are accounted as unprofitable servants, who, having cast off God in this life, are cast off by Him in the judgment-day; who, having lived for and loved only what is of the earth earthy, perish with the earth, and never see those "new heavens and that new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness," that heavenly new Jerusalem, the dwelling-place of the saints.

Now, my brethren, this need not and this ought not to be the unhappy fate of any one of us. We are living in our day of salvation; we have it offered to us now. Let us take a hint from the prayer contained in the concluding verses of my text: "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be alway acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer." Here is the prayer and its twofold object —first, that our words may please God; and secondly,

what is more silent than our words, but still more fruitful of result even than our words, the meditations of our hearts, which are the spring of all we are and do in the world, that they may please God. If *these* be right, all will be right. If the heart be right with God, our words will be good and holy and true, and minister grace unto the hearers; "for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." But now to insure all this, what we must have is what we all may have; *i.e.* the continual, ever-present, never-forsaking, presence of the Holy Spirit. God will give the Holy Spirit to them that *ask* Him for it. Indeed He has once made our hearts *His* temple, *His* dwelling-place. It is not with us as it was with them of old, upon whom the blessed Spirit shone like the light of the sun, or the light of a candle shining and reflecting itself in a mirror, but ceasing to shine and be reflected when that ray of sunshine has passed away, or the light is extinguished. It is not *so* with us in the Church of God. The Saviour ascended from earth to heaven that He might send down the Comforter which should abide with us for ever. We are His dwelling-place. He is with us unceasingly: "Know ye not that the Spirit of God is in you, except ye be reprobates?" "Know ye not that your bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?" Here is our strength, brethren, to resist sin, and to perfect holiness. God pleads with us as we lend ourselves willingly to the

still small inward voice of His Spirit. God *strengthens* us against sin when we put forth our powers to love and serve and honour Him. God preserves those who strive and live for *Him* in this world. He sanctifies us more and more unto Himself as we yield ourselves to His workings within us. Then all is pleasing to Him; then the words of our mouth, the meditation of our hearts, yea, all our ways, even the smallest events of our humble life, are acceptable to Him.

SERMON XXIII.

"*Some put their trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the Name of the Lord our God.*"—PSALM XX. 7.

THIS psalm is generally held to be a prayer of the people of God for Christ their head. The first four verses have been supposed to have been the prayer of those who lived before Christ; the latter verses a prayer for all of us to use since the redemption of mankind. We may readily suppose that in so great a work as the redemption of the world, God would make it altogether above and beyond any interference on man's own part. But it is not so. The Saviour delights to make us share with Him in all His great and perfect work. When He was on earth He healed the sick, but He required them, or at least their wants, to be brought before Him by others. He did not distribute cures universally and indiscriminately. When He was amongst us He blessed little children; but they were children *brought to* Him by others for the purpose. In the wilderness He fed five thousand people upon a few loaves and fishes; but He required what food there was

amongst them all to be brought to Him, and then He gave it out as it miraculously multiplied in His hands, to be distributed through the hands of the apostles. And when He looked abroad upon the world, and saw the multitudes which were lost and perishing, He spoke as though all depended upon us, rather than on Him: "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth labourers into His harvest."

And so if we turn from the Master to one of the chief of His servants, we might well suppose that S. Paul's usefulness for Christ in the world would be wholly independent of anything which other men could do to help him in his labours, or to hinder him in them. And yet we find him in almost every epistle asking the prayers of Christian people for himself, as though much, if not all, of His success for Christ depended upon them; and we find him speaking of the unhappy success which some had had in undoing his work, and hindering his success, and so forth.

We shall never understand on this side the grave the limits of God's preventing grace, and of man's co-operation with God in doing good. We cannot define where the one begins and the other leaves off, or the contrary. To take that well-known case of S. Paul's shipwreck off the island of Melita—all that were in the ship were to be saved, but it was on the express *condition* that the sailors remained in the ship, and each did what he could to save himself and those around him. And thus arose

the old proverb, "Help thyself, and heaven will help thee." We know not in the least how much Christianity in the world depends upon Christian people simply saying on their knees day by day, again and again, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." For all we know, but for this, the whole work of Christ in the world might come to an end. But God by His grace keeps up our prayers, and brings them to pass; and so, though we see not their effect and work in particular cases, yet we *know* that no word of earnest prayer ever falls to the ground which is offered up in faith in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And this leads me to say a word about the name of our Lord Jesus. My text says, "Some put their trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." Perhaps David, when he first uttered these words, was thinking of his conflict with Goliath of Gath. The safety of Israel depended upon the issue of that conflict. On the one side was the giant, a man of war from his youth, armed with a coat of mail from head to foot. To these outward advantages he trusted for safety and victory. His great stature, his well-trained skill and strength, his defensive armour—these on the one side; on the other side there was the young man David, a mere youth, and untrained to war, hitherto a peaceful keeper of sheep; but there was this difference, which he himself stated thus at the moment, "Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a

sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; . . . . that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear." Surely no illustration of the words of my text could be more apt than this case of David himself—"Some put their trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God."

And we Christians are taught to pray that God's "name may be hallowed." Israel and ourselves are commanded never to "take God's name in vain: for He will not hold such persons to be guiltless." And so careful were God's people in old time not to break this third commandment, that the sacred name of Jehovah was pronounced only once in a year, and then only by the high priest. But now, with us Christians, the name of Jesus stands in the place of God's former name of Jehovah, but with this difference, that we are commanded to use it only with great reverence and awe. S. Paul tells us, that "at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow;" and these words of the apostle led to the custom of Christian people bowing their *heads* at the mention of the sacred name of Jesus. And if we cannot all do this at *every* occurrence of that name, yet all ought to do it occasionally, certainly in the creed if not

elsewhere. Those who *never* do so are quite sure to use that name carelessly and thoughtlessly; but by forming a habit of doing so with some sign of *outward* reverence, this will protect them from any infringement of the third commandment.

And we must not forget that in the earlier days of the gospel God granted special miracles to be wrought by the mere mention of the name of Jesus. That there is some hidden and supernatural power in it we might be sure, if from nothing else, at least from this, that the name was twice repeated by an angel from heaven. First of all to Mary. S. Luke tells us that the angel said, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus." Afterwards the angel appeared to Joseph, and said, "She shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins." Then we find our Lord saying that the efficacy of our prayers depends upon *our use* of His name: "Whatsoever ye shall ask *in My Name*, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything *in My Name*, I will do it." Again He said: "For where two or three are gathered together *in My Name*, there am I in the midst of them." So, again, we find the seventy disciples on their return saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us *through Thy Name*." And so after He had left us, we find the apostles working miracles by use of the sacred name: "Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none;

but such as I have give I thee: *in the name of* Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." And when the multitude were pricked to the heart on the day of Pentecost, and asked of the apostles what they ought to do, S. Peter replied, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Then we find him declaring to the Jewish council this: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is *none other Name* under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

There is yet one more instance of a different kind which we ought not to forget, as showing the supernatural power of the name of Jesus, pronounced in faith or in unbelief: "Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had the evil spirits *the Name of the Lord Jesus*, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the *name* of the Lord Jesus was magnified." (Acts xix. 13–17.) In this case we see that the name of the Lord Jesus *profanely* used enabled one man in whom an evil

spirit dwelt to overcome seven more wicked than himself. I say, then, we know not what effect in the world of spiritual things the simple mention of the name of Jesus has. With God Himself it so prevails that no earnest, faithful prayer offered up through it fails to be heard, or is denied its request. "*Whatsoever* ye shall ask in *my name*, I will do it," is the promise. And we know not also what power over the spirits of evil the same all-holy name is continually exorcising. It is a glimpse of its efficacy over them which the man with the unclean spirit affords who exclaimed, "What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come hither to destroy us before the time? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God."

Let us, then, learn something from all this that has gone before. The verse I have selected from this twentieth psalm for my text says, "Some put their trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." In honouring the eternal Son, who bears that sacred name of Jesus, we honour the Father: "All men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him."

Let us, then, never forget the prevailing efficacy of the name of Jesus. We are in the habit of ending our prayers with it; but how few of us probably reflect, that each time we name His name, we mention that

plea which God never resisteth—we mention Him whom angels worship, and evil spirits flee away from and avoid. Let us, then, never use it carelessly or thoughtlessly; but let us use it, and love to use it. It is dear to the meek and lowly; it is dear to the penitent; it is dear to the sad and the forlorn; it brings comfort to the mourner, and consolation to the sick and suffering. The old may look forward to their rest in God through Him; and our little children, through His name, may perfect God's praises upon earth. Let others be occupied altogether in worldly things and earthly occupations; let others thus trust in chariots and in horses; let others endeavour, if they will, to serve God and mammon, which ends in their serving only the latter; but let us "remember the name of the Lord our God." Let us love the name of Jesus, through whom alone we hope for salvation. Let us love to repeat it in our prayers, knowing that God never fails to listen to the prayers of faithful men who plead through it to Him. Let us call Him to us in our daily needs and in our hours of temptation. And if we so live in the faith and love of Jesus, then in the hour of our death, and in the day of judgment, let us not fear but He will deliver us—He who is mighty to save, He who is alone able to deliver. "Save, Lord, and hear us, O King of heaven: when we call upon thee," through Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON XXIV.

"*He asked life of thee, and thou gavest him a long life, even for ever and ever.*"—PSALM xxi. 4.

THESE beautiful words mark the grave of one in this neighbourhood whose voice was heard occasionally in this church—one of God's chosen people. He was one of the excellent of the earth, who was cut off very suddenly in the prime of his holy and useful life. Perhaps, as the wise man says, "His soul pleased the Lord: therefore hasted He to take him away." In Tunstead churchyard, he "being dead yet speaketh" to us in these words of my text, stirring up those who knew him by his devout and holy life, and the remembrance we ought to have of the just, to seek as our chief work on earth "that eternal life which is with Christ in God." And none of us could desire a more beautiful text for our own grave than this; nor desire that any words more appropriate than these should be true of us in each of its parts—its petition and its fulfilment. First, there is the petition: "He asked life of thee." Next, there is the fulfilment in far larger measure than we dare hope or expect: "Thou gavest him a long life, even for ever and ever."

First of all, these words must be taken in their reference to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The last psalm we considered—the 20th—speaks of the Lord's humiliation. This psalm speaks of His glory and exaltation as man. Thus it is one of the special psalms selected by the Church for Ascension-day. It does not pray, like the last did, "The Lord hear thee in the day of *trouble:* the name of the God of Jacob defend thee." All that is passed and over. It is now of the *triumph* of the Lord. Thus, "The *King* shall rejoice in thy strength, O Lord: exceeding glad shall He be of thy *salvation.* Thou hast given Him His heart's desire, and hast not denied Him the request of His lips. For thou shalt prevent Him with the blessings of goodness; and shalt set a *crown* of pure gold upon His head." "Be thou exalted, Lord, in thine own strength: so will we sing, and praise thy power." Thus, as with most of the psalms, this one primarily belongs, we may be sure, to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and is, as I say, descriptive of and prophetic of His exaltation and glory as man, as the last psalm is of His humiliation and acceptance of the prayers of men for the increase of His kingdom.

But then there is this blessed thought—what belongs to Christ belongs in some measure to *all* them that are Christ's. "He is not ashamed to call us brethren;" "He is the first-born from the dead;" "The first-fruits of the resurrection;" "He is the Head of the body—the

Church;" we are its separate members; "and we know that when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory," "and be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." These passages are sufficient out of the many that I might select to remind us of that *great truth*, that Christ our Lord has made Himself one with us men by taking our manhood into His own Godhead; and as He has thus taken of us —taken *upon Himself* what is ours—so He gives to us who are His what is *His own*—all that is true, and all that is glorious and eternal.

It is a great mystery, my brethren, how the old Adam—the nature of sin—lives in us, and descends to each of us from generation to generation—the same sins, the same feelings, the same features and resemblances, dispositions and gifts, going on unfailingly—transmitted from parent to son in perpetual generations. And equally above our understanding is the other great mystery, how we are made one with Christ by baptism, and more and more closely and entirely one with Him by the reception of the sacrament of His body and blood; but so it is—Christ so becomes one with us by faith. We partake of *His* glorious, and eternal, and spiritual nature, just as He by becoming man partook of our poor human nature, and was in all respects like unto us, sin only excepted. So indeed it is, and most blessed it is for us to feel and to know this. We have life from Christ's life; as He said Himself, "Because I

live, ye shall live also." We have grace out of the fountain of His exhaustless store; so that no degree of sanctity is impossible for us, if so be that Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, and we live in, and for, and through Him, who is the bread of life. As He said, "I am the bread of life;" so we do well to pray with the first disciples, "Lord, evermore give us this bread."

These thoughts, my brethren, will easily introduce the connection in which the words of my text stand to us. In Christ they are true of all who love our Lord Jesus Christ, as they are supremely true of Him who is the fountain of life. "He asked life of thee, and thou gavest him a long life, even for ever and ever." "He asked life of thee." Is this true of us? It depends upon what meaning we attach to the petition "asking life." If it meant only going down on our knees, and saying, "Lord, give us life," I suppose there are very few indeed who would ever *fail* of obtaining that "long life, even for ever and ever." None would omit to ask for it, if that were all. But it is not so. It is life given to God *here* in the hope of life to be received from God hereafter. It is the life of faith and work here which fits us, and prepares us, for the life of glory hereafter—the life hid with Christ in God here bringing about, and bringing us to that life which is to be revealed after the judgment of the last day in the kingdom of the resurrection. First of all, we may of course put out of all hope of this life eternal all who

openly reject it—who reject God, reject His salvation through Christ from themselves, and by their sins and unbelief crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame. Of such we need not speak, and they are unhappily many. We leave them in God's hands.

But there is a closer sifting for us to make, and one which it is very necessary for all to make who, like ourselves, dwell in the midst of great religious privileges and blessings, and are surrounded, as we all are here, with those means of grace and salvation which God has ordained in His Church. It is the heart given to God which God requires. Without that words of prayer will not save us; calling upon God will not in itself save us; listening to prayers and hearing sermons simply by themselves will not save us. What the Pharisees of old were, it is just as easy for Christian people to be nowadays, if they do not take heed—to be outwardly sanctified, inwardly corrupt—honouring God with their lips, while their hearts are far from Him. We can know little of ourselves, my brethren, or of the world, and of God's requirements, without discovering that our religion may only too easily be in any man like the clothes which he so regularly takes off at night and puts on in the morning—hearers of the word without being doers of that word, "having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." How plainly does the Lord, who knew every heart, speak of this when He says: "Why

call ye me Lord, Lord, but DO not the things that I say unto you? He that heareth my words, but *doeth them not*, is like a man which built his house upon the sand." Thus as this is a common danger which all persons run who live amid the blessings of religion and of the knowledge of God as we do, so we must take care that *our* asking of God for life consists in far more than in simple kneeling down and begging Him to bestow upon us that eternal life, "granting to us," as we so often say, "in this world knowledge of His truth, and in the world to come life everlasting." I say it must be the life, the heart, the will, the whole inner man given to God here, through faith and hope of that eternal life which He will bestow upon His true people in the world beyond the grave. Our hearts and all our members must be mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts. We must not only abstain from sin, but we must strive to do good, and to grow in grace. We must ask for the Spirit, and take care to use that gift as often and as fully as He is bestowed upon us; for "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." We must be rich in good works. And if we would but do this, my brethren, God repays us a thousandfold more than ever we desire or deserve. We know nothing yet of the glories which God has in store for them that love Him. The greatest earthly beauty of scenery or things cannot convey to our minds the faintest resemblance of the things which are in heaven. They surpass our

every conception, and are unspeakable by human language. If we by our life, as well as by our prayers, ask of God life, He will give us far more than we imagine or desire—that long life, that life which is full of joy and peace, and knows no end—"a long life, even for ever and ever," at God's right hand. All this as it is Christ's, so it comes to us only as bestowed upon us through Him, He taking our manhood, that we might in like manner share in His divine nature and glory.

But then our life in this world must be as far as we can make it a resemblance of His pure and blessed life while He was on earth, the perfect example of what every man ought to be who is made in the image and likeness of God. We find Him continually in the temple; we find Him continually at His prayers. If His days were too occupied and busied for prayer, and crowds surrounded Him, then it was that His nights were given up to prayer. We find Him indifferent to all earthly things, so that He might make it His meat and drink to fulfil the work which He was sent forth to do in this world. We find Him for ever doing good, both to the bodies and souls of men; so gentle to those who were so rude to Him; so merciful to the fallen and penitent, whom men scorned; so compassionate to the afflicted; so forgiving to all who injured Him, but, like S. Peter, turned again, and wept over the remembrance of their sin. "His compassions failed not, nor fail; they are new to each of us every morning." And what

He was perfectly and altogether, that we must be in part. Then shall we have life from His life. Thus if we ask for life, He will give us at the last day "a long life, even for ever and ever." But all this is not of ourselves, except from and through Him who is "the resurrection and the life. We cannot live *for* Christ except as we live *in* Christ, and He lives in us. If we try to live the spiritual life without Him, we shall not attain to it; we can only fail. It must be with us all, "Christ in us the hope of glory." And herein, I repeat it again and again, is the great mystery and the great use of the holy sacraments which Christ hath given us. If rightly received in faith and penitence of heart, therein and thereby Christ dwells in us, and we in Him; we are one with Christ, and He with us. We cannot lead the spiritual life without that sacramental grace, because we cannot partake of Christ, through whom alone comes the power of living unto God, except in the way He has Himself ordained.

If we compare a great part of John vi. with my text, we shall see how often the word "life" occurs, and is always referred to the Christian's union with Christ our Head as the only true source of spiritual and eternal life. It is as we live in Christ, and Christ lives in us, that we ask for life here, and receive as His gift, so far more than either we desire or deserve, that "long life, even for ever and ever." Do not suppose, my brethren, that any Christian can obtain that life without com-

munion with Christ. It would be as reasonable for a man to expect to cross the sea, walking upon the troubled waves, without sinking; it would be as reasonable to expect the earth to bring forth of its own self its fruits and its harvest without labour, and skill, and toil on our part. No, brethren, it is as we live in and for Christ in this world that we shall find life—life *from* Him here, life *with* Him hereafter. Thus asking life, He will give us life, "yea, a long life, even for ever and ever." Amen.

SERMON XXV.

"*My God, my God, look upon me; why hast thou forsaken me?*"
PSALM xxii. 1.

IN continuing, as I have done lately, this course of short sermons on the Psalms in the order in which they stand, we come to-day to Psalm xxii. Nothing could have happened more appropriately; for this is the first Sunday in Lent. Why is Lent set apart as it is? What is its use? What is the purpose of the Church's order in this? Surely it is principally that we may contemplate the cross and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ in its several aspects; that is, in its *cause* and necessity, which are our sins; in its effect and result, which are a full atonement for the sins of the whole world. But this forgiveness is bestowed upon us, first, as we confess so often, "I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins;" afterwards, on our humbling ourselves before God for what we have done amiss; and on our sincere desire and effort more and more to subdue sin in ourselves, especially those which do most easily beset us. To this Lent calls each of us. Now in Psalm xxii. we have not merely a prophecy foretelling of what

was to happen a thousand years after it was written, as in so many other of the psalms; but we have the *actual words* which were spoken on the cross, and the very deeds and events related which occurred round the cross, and in the very words in which they are recorded in the Gospels in most complete minuteness. These first words of this psalm take us to the deepest and saddest moment of all in our Lord's life and passion. There are but two other passages which can at all be placed alongside of these words; but even they fail to match the depth of these unfathomable words of grief and suffering, this exceeding bitter cry, this the terrible utterance of the Saviour in His severest trial of all. When these words were spoken, there was darkness over all the land from the sixth to the ninth hour; *i.e.* according to our time from twelve o'clock at noon till three in the afternoon. Let us not forget how great the brightness and heat of an eastern sun is at the paschal season at midday, and then let us picture to ourselves the wonderful fact that this blazing sun at midday hid its face, shrouded all the land in night, covered the earth with the shadows of evening, so that those hardened eyes of sinful men which did not fear to look upon the dying agonies of the Saviour of the world, the only begotten Son of God, our Creator, were blinded in part if not altogether. There appears to have been for those three hours silence round the cross—at least nothing is told us. It was very much like the three

days' darkness in Egypt before Israel was delivered, when they saw not one another, and no one rose from his place for three days; that is described to us "as a darkness which might *be felt*." And the book of Wisdom, containing probably an old tradition amongst the Jews, says, during that terrible night of three whole days in length, the Egyptians were troubled "with strange apparitions, noises as of waters falling down sounded about them, and sad visions appeared unto them with heavy countenances. No power of the fire might give them light, neither could the bright shining of the stars endure to lighten those horrible three days of night, only there appeared unto them a fire kindled of itself very dreadful, and they were scared with beasts that passed by and hissing of serpents; for they were all bound with one chain of darkness." This is the only other instance we have to compare with those three hours of darkness round the cross at midday. God spread the drapery of night over the most terrible part of the most terrible scene which this earth ever beheld. We know not whether it was a total darkness, so that no one could behold the person next him like in Egypt, or whether it were a twilight, something between perfect day and perfect darkness, throwing out into relief the white figure of the dying Saviour, bleached by suffering and the loss of blood, as some of us perhaps may have looked by moonlight on the picture of the crucifixion in our church window, and seen it stand out from the

surrounding shade. I am more disposed, however, to imagine, that as no human mind or eye could penetrate the deep and dark agony through which the Lord for our sakes was passing at the time, so His sacred person and terrible anguish and struggle with the powers of darkness were for those three hours shrouded altogether from the gaze and jeers of the heathen multitude around, till the words come forth from His lips: "My God, my God, look upon me; why hast thou forsaken me?" This, remember, is the fourth or middle saying of the seven words from the cross. There had been silence, as I said, for three hours during the darkness. Three hours had preceded that darkness—then came the long silence—then, just before daylight was returning at the ninth hour (three p.m.), there goes forth from the cross a loud voice, so loud as probably to have echoed and re-echoed through the minds of all around, and among the hills which stand about Jerusalem; and immediately follow those most bitter, agonizing words of all: "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

I said, however, that there were two other periods and words of our Lord which in *some* measure resembled these. One was His reply on being told by S. Philip and S. Andrew that certain Greeks wished to see Him. The other was during the agony in Gethsemane on the last night, after the last supper was over. First, it was

on one of the last days of our Lord's teaching in the temple that certain Greeks came to Philip, and desired him, saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus." "Philip cometh and telleth Andrew; and again, Andrew and Philip tell Jesus." Then it is that our Lord utters words, the full depth of which, like those of my text, we cannot enter into. It seems as though to His foreseeing mind this message of the two apostles sounded in His ears like the prayer of the whole Gentile world to receive Him as their Saviour. It stirred a most sublime train of thought in Him. He began to "see of the travail of His soul, and to be satisfied;" but there was the bitter cross first to be undergone, so He passes at once from the thought of future glory, and the redemption of man, to think for a moment of what has to be done first, and was so close at hand.

He closes His eyes, as it were, to the speaker and the crowd around to forecast his own bitter trial close at hand: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." These words disclose to us the deep trouble of soul which our Lord had before Him at the thought of His passion, how His all-holy nature shrank from it, but how meekly and readily He submitted Himself to it, and gave Himself to the work He had undertaken for our sakes.

Again, once more, before the bitter cry of my text finds its place, there are the words in the garden of Gethsemane, betraying the same shrinking dread of what had to come to pass in Him—not, we may be sure, the mere *human* suffering of the cross, not the mere *bodily* suffering, great as that was, but the bitter penalty of standing in the sinner's stead, the light of the Father's countenance withdrawn for a time, the support and consolation of His divine nature mysteriously hid or darkened for a time, that Christ might indeed taste the sinner's doom to the full, and stand in the sinner's stead. Think of the thrice-repeated prayer in the garden, and compare it with the words of my text: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;" "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt;" "Not my will, but thine, be done." These two passages and my text set forth the shrinking dread which the Saviour felt of God's wrath passed upon the sinner, and now to pass upon Him as our one great offering for all sin—but the same sacrifice of Himself and submission of His own will to God's will shines forth in all. It was not, we may be quite sure, that the Saviour, who was God Himself, for ever one with the Father, was forsaken of God, but that He stood at that moment in the sinner's place. He felt the fierceness of God's wrath; He saw too the rejection of the Jews; He saw too, after all His sufferings, how *few* would be

saved out of the many redeemed. God the Father's love could not be taken from Him. The sacrifice of the death of Christ, the self-oblation of the eternal Son, out of love for us, was the very essence of the Father's love to Him. As He had said before, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life for the sheep." But, perhaps putting these three passages together may make us enter in some faint measure into the depth of the Saviour's woe. It was ever present to His mind. It was not with Him as it is with us. We cannot foresee troubles and sufferings. Come they do, to some thickly and more thickly; still we are spared the foreseeing them. It was not so with Christ; He foresaw all. The ways and hearts of men were spread out before Him like a map under our eyes, on which we trace the boundaries of sea and land. And my text finds its place at the culminating point of all. The three sentences which rapidly follow it from the cross speak of the work as accomplished and done—the worst over. It was the very and most acute point of all when the bitter cry went forth—"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani."

Now, my brethren, it is to fix our thoughts on the passion of Christ that these weeks of Lent now beginning are specially set apart. Its cause was man's sin; its effect was man's redemption from sin and death. If the cross of Christ does not draw our hearts to God, nothing ever will. If those arms, stretched out as wide

as possible apart, do not embrace us, nothing will ever save us. It is Christ's love for us which begets man's love for Him. It is His cross borne for us which enables any of us and makes any of us to crucify our sins for His sake. Let us try this Lent to give ourselves up to understanding and loving more than we do now the bitter passion of our Lord and Saviour. Let us take it as the one special subject of our thoughts and prayers during this Lent now begun. Did Christ indeed so love us as to die for us? Then let us repay His love by new love to Him, and by more perfect love of one another. Did He so hate sin as to die, that we might be set free from its power and its guilt? Then let us strive to hate and conquer our sins, that we may more and more repay His sufferings for us, and refresh Him with the sacrifice of a renewed heart and will.

Did He from His cross forgive and pray for those who at the moment were piercing His hands and His feet with the nails? What excuse, then, can any of us ever have, to be unforgiving towards one another, cold and careless of each other's good and welfare? Did He forgive the penitent thief, and promise him paradise and rest with Him? Then let us never look down proudly or carelessly upon the sins and follies of others; but let us strive to save them, and bring them to salvation? Did He in the midst of His own untold sufferings care for His blessed mother, and commend her to the love of S. John? Then let us ever be careful for those who are

bound to us by earthly ties, and do them good in all ways which lie in our power. Did He for us suffer till at last the words of my text broke from His inmost soul? Then let us love to deny ourselves for others' sakes, and do them good in all ways at all times. Did He thirst for the salvation of the world? Let us by our prayers, by our alms, and most of all by our own holy and consistent example of a Christian life, strive to set forward the salvation of all men. Did He cry out at last, "It is finished"?—all types, sacrifices, and prophecies. Let us love His holy Scriptures, which are the voice of God pointing out to us the way of salvation. And, last of all, Did He commend His soul into God's hands? So let us live that we may die unto the Lord, and be laid in our graves in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON XXVI.

"My God, my God, look upon me: why hast thou forsaken me: and art so far from my health, and from the words of my complaint?"

PSALM xxii. 1.

LET me go back for a few minutes to recount the chief points I brought before you in connection with these words last Sunday. The whole 22nd psalm up to verse 21 is a history of our Lord's passion, and after that verse it passes to His triumph over death and the grave. It contains the very words used on and round the cross. These first words of it are the middle cry of the seven sentences which were uttered from the cross. They were uttered, it is believed, just at the close of the Saviour's direst strife with Satan, and submission of Himself to man's curse for sin. The darkness which had spread itself at noonday over all the land was on the point of passing away. They were spoken by Him as having taken the sinner's place in relation to the Father; not as a despairing soul passing out of this world hopelessly lost for ever, but as the one great offering for all sin, then undergoing the extreme penalty of sin, and the frown of His Almighty Father, to whom

He still clings by calling upon God as Eloi—"my God."

The very terrible agony of distress which these words indicate are shadowed forth, as I said on two previous occasions. First, when a few days before certain Greeks asked of Philip that they might see Jesus; and when He is told of their desire, He rejoiced in spirit for the moment at the thought of the whole Gentile world turning through Him unto God; but in a moment after His heart reverts to the crucifixion with its bodily and untold suffering, which had to be gone through first. Then there is the agony during the previous night in Gethsemane, when, at the thought of this strife, which was just ending at the words of my text, "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground." This is the outline of the chief points I spoke of last Sunday upon the special circumstances connected with these words of my text, when they fell from the Saviour's dying lips but a few minutes, it is supposed, before life was extinct.

To-day let us turn our attention to a few thoughts upon the whole seven sayings from the cross, amongst which these words of my text hold the middle place. Three sentences had preceded them; then the three hours of darkness came on; then three sentences followed them. I have before now said at times, that a peculiar meaning seems attached throughout the Holy Scriptures to particular numbers. Thus the number 3 is supposed to signify infinite power and duration, as it is the number

of the persons in the one Almighty Godhead. The number 4 represents universality or perfection in that which is finite, as there are four quarters of the globe, four elements, four corners of the earth, four seasons, four rivers in Paradise, four evangelists. Now, the number 7, which all through the Bible is continually occurring, and is made up of the number 3 combined with the number 4; *i.e.* the perfection of that which is *infinite* added to the perfection of that which is *finite*—the union of the Godhead with manhood, of heaven with earth, of spirit with the body, the law and gospel of God with earthly kingdoms and power.

The present Archbishop of Dublin, commenting on the book of Revelation, after noticing how in that mysterious book the number 7 prevails from first to last—for there are in it seven churches and seven angels, seven spirits, seven candlesticks, seven stars, seven lamps of fire, seven seals, seven horns and seven eyes of the Lamb, seven heavenly angels with seven trumpets, seven thunders, seven heads of the dragon, seven crowns upon the heads, seven last plagues, seven vials, seven mountains, seven kings, seven ascriptions of glory to the Lamb, and seven to God—after remarking upon this very wonderful coincidence of the number 7 in that heavenly book, says, "The symbolic dignity of the number 7 runs through the whole of Scripture from first to last. A careful induction from all passages where this number cannot be regarded as fortuitous,

but is evidently of divine ordinance and appointment, will leave no doubt that it claims through Scripture to be considered as the COVENANT number—*the sign and signature of God's covenant relation to mankind*—and above all, to that portion of mankind, His Church, with which this relation is an actual relationship. The evidences of this reach back to the very beginning of the world. We meet with them first in the hallowing of the seventh day, after the six days of creation, in pledge and token of the *covenant* of God with man. So, too, circumcision, being the sign of a covenant, is accomplished on the eighth day, or after seven days are over. Seven is the number to be used in all treaties of peace, and in contracts of marriage, in oaths, in sacrifices, in purification and consecration, and it is the sign of forforgiveness. Then, again, seven is the number of every grace and benefit bestowed upon Israel. The priests compass Jericho seven times, and on the seventh day seven times. Seven is the number of reward to those who are faithful, of punishment to those who are froward. All the feasts of the Jews are ordered by seven, or else by seven multiplied into seven. Thus it is with the Passover, with the feast of Pentecost, of tabernacles, of the sabbath year, and of the jubilee. Seven is the number of the years of plenty and of famine in Egypt. Naaman is ordered to wash seven times in Jordan; Nebuchadnezzar is driven forth for seven years. In the New Testament we find seven

beatitudes, seven clauses in the Lord's Prayer, seven sayings to the woman of Samaria, seven words from the cross." This will be enough to show what I said, that the number 3 is the signature of God; 4, that of the world; and thus 7, being made up of 3 and 4 put together, is the token and sign of the covenant between God and man.

And this, my brethren, is no unprofitable thought in considering these last dying words of our Lord on His cross; because it shows us that there is no limit to the depth and fulness of their meaning—they reach far beyond anything that we can imagine. Let me repeat them to you, and then show a few of the meanings which have been pointed out in them.* Our Lord's words on the cross were—1. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." 2. "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." 3. To S. John, "Behold thy mother;" to His mother, "Behold thy Son." 4. "Eloi, Eloi." 5. "I thirst." 6. "It is finished." 7. "Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit." Now, first of all these sacred words may be taken as teaching us those *duties* which lie at the very foundation of true Christian obedience and evangelical charity. First, they teach us forgiveness of injuries and love of our enemies; secondly, penitence and its acceptance with God; thirdly, the duty of parents to their children, and of children to their parents; fourthly,

* See Williams on *The Passion.*

the fear of God and His hatred of sin; fifthly, the sure fulfilment of His word; sixthly, perfect obedience; seventhly, resignation to God's will. Again, a second way in which these seven sentences on the cross may be taken is as containing within them the great mysteries of our faith, and the doctrines emanating from the Saviour's cross, such as these: 1. The remission of sins; 2. The intermediate state with Christ; 3. The Church as the home of all in sorrow and suffering; 4. The terribleness of God's judgments; 5. The truth of the Holy Scriptures; 6. Justification through Christ; 7. The resurrection of the body.

In a third way, they set forth the mysterious attributes of our blessed Lord Himself; *e.g.* 1. His mediation and intercession for us in heaven; 2. His Kingly power; 3. His being the Son of man; 4. His having a human soul; 5. His having a human body; 6. His sinless perfection; 7. His voluntary sacrifice of Himself. And thus the cross itself on which He dies becomes to us—1. The throne of our King; 2. The altar of our High Priest; 3. The tribunal of our Judge; 4. The mercy-seat of God; 5. The trophy of the Conqueror of death; 6. The ensign of the Captain of our salvation; 7. The rod of His justice against sinners. And still there is one other way in which I must mention that these seven words on the cross have been taken as setting forth His own words in seven of His striking parables. Thus (1) the prayer, "Father, for-

give them; for they know not what they do," represents the rich creditor who frankly forgave his debtor ten thousand talents. (2) "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise," are the words of the Good Shepherd who had found the lost sheep, and was bearing it home rejoicing to His Father's fold. (3) The commending His mother to the care of S. John, when a sword had pierced her soul, is the act of the good Samaritan, who committed the wounded man to the master of the inn before leaving, saying, "Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee." (4) The words of my text express the words of the publican, who would not so much as lift his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." (5) The words, "I thirst," may be signified in the dying Lazarus at the gate of Dives, who, while angels were waiting to receive his soul into Paradise, was dying without the gate in want and nakedness. (6) "It is finished," may remind us all of the bridegroom in the parable standing by and saying to the five foolish virgins, "It is too late;" "It is finished;" all opportunities are past; the door is now shut for ever. And lastly, when our Lord commends His righteous soul into the hands of His Father, it was as the firstborn among many brethren—as the first of those who, like "the good and faithful servant," shall "enter into the joy of his Lord," and shall be made "ruler over all that He hath." Now these, brethren, are

only some of the wonderful significances which have been given to the seven sentences from the cross, of which my text forms the central one. It shows us that where, as here, the number 7 occurs uniting the fulness of God, shown by the number 3, with the fulness of man, shown by the number 4, there and then there are infinite meanings in simple passages far beyond the mere outside letter, which alone would be noticed by the world's eye.

It requires the spiritual mind to enter at all into the fulness of God's word. There is a hidden meaning often in the shortest sentence of the Bible, which, except it be unfolded to us by the Spirit, we shall never perceive. It is as S. Paul says, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Men are often very blind to all this. They know not that God reveals Himself only to the faithful; and thus they reason about and discuss holy things in a cold and unbelieving tone, denying to spiritual things any power beyond that which they see with their own darkened eyes, and hear with their own cold ears, and can touch by their depraved outward sense. Let us, my brethren, pray to be delivered from such a temper as that.

If we would find out God, and the mysteries of God, and the depths of His word, and the power of spiritual things, we must go to the study of all the things of God

in the assurance of faith, in the fulness of belief. The unbelieving heart will *never* find out God, or understand holy things: *e.g.* Why do we all reverence a church, and men take their hats off their heads as they enter its door? It is because to us who believe, this is *God's* house, and He is continually present herein. Why do we bring our little infants to the font, and there pour but a few drops of water upon them, and at once speak of their having undergone the greatest possible spiritual change in their relationship to God? Simply because to us who believe that water is by Christ's word and ordinance the instrument or means of making the worthy receiver a partaker of His cross and passion, and of all the benefits which come from them. Or why do we rejoice to receive again and again in church what to the natural and unbelieving eye is nothing more than common bread and wine, however solemnly received? Simply because our all-wise and almighty Lord has ordained these simple elements of bread and wine to be, through His word and by the power of His Spirit, to the believer's soul the channel or instrument of His mightiest gifts of grace—the way by which he is made and is kept one with Christ, and Christ one with him in mystic union; and so by degrees he grows up more and more into the image of Christ, as every child grows bodily by ordinary food: the gifts of the Holy Ghost are increased in him, and the power of sin is proportionately subdued and conquered. Thus, my

brethren, we must bring to every ordinance of God a true, living, and abiding *faith*, or the greatest means of grace will be profitless to us, we shall not find God, nor will He accept us in them; and if so, then, when we pass out of this world, it will be but too truly necessary, but too truly useless and profitless, for us to pray, and to pray again and again, "O God, God of all mercy, my God, look upon me: why hast thou forsaken me? and art so far from my health, and from the words of my complaint?"

SERMON XXVII.

"*But as for me, I am a worm, and no man; a very scorn of men, and the outcast of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out their lips, and shake their heads, saying, He trusted in God that He would deliver him: let Him deliver him, if He will have him.*"—PSALM xxii. 6–8.

IN continuing our thoughts upon the Saviour's passion, as verse by verse it is both foretold and fore-described in this psalm, we must be struck again and again with the occurrence of the very words of this psalm in the gospel accounts of the crucifixion. The first words of it are, as I have already reminded you, the VERY words of the fourth saying out of the seven from the cross. Again, the last words of my text to-day are found in S. Matt. xxvii. 41. There we read: "Likewise also the chief priests mocking Him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. *He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him*: for He said, I am the Son of God." Here, you see, occur the very words of my text. To-day, then, we will confine our thoughts to what I will call the Saviour's *mental*

agony, as distinguished both from that anguish of *soul* which the great and bitter cry expresses, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and from the *bodily* pains which we shall find described in some of the next verses which come after my text of to-day. And just as we cannot really enter into the bitterness of that grief when the guilt of the whole world was laid upon One who was conscious of all those transgressions ever done under the sun, and of the extreme penalty due for them, which He had undertaken to satisfy in His own person, so here we really are unable to mark more than the mere *outline* of that *mental* suffering which the Saviour passed through on that terrible day and night of His passion. Of His few personal friends, the twelve apostles, one sold Him into the hands of His enemies for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a common slave, having sought opportunity to do so for some time past; another thrice denied with oaths that he knew Him, or had had any intercourse with Him; and *all* of them forsook Him and fled. Again, one trial before a Christian magistrate is trouble enough for most men in our day; but Christ our Lord, let us remember, passed through four or five distinct trials within those few hours. First, there was the private examination conducted in the house of the high priest; next, He was brought before the Sanhedrim, or great council of the nation, presided over by Caiaphas, acting as high priest; thirdly, He was brought before Pilate, who examines

Him both privately and publicly; fourthly, Pilate sends Him to Herod, hoping thereby to escape the difficult position he felt himself in, between a conscience telling him what was right, and an excited mob of people crying out for the Lord's condemnation to death; fifthly, from Herod, He is brought back again to Pilate, who persists in declaring His innocence, tries to induce the people to accept Him as the prisoner released by custom at the passover; but to his dismay finds Barabbas, the robber and murderer, preferred for release, and so Pilate washes his hands before the multitude as an outward token of His exceeding unwillingness to pronounce the sentence of death they clamoured for, feeling that to do so was to be guilty of innocent blood, from which he would wash his hands.

Only suppose for a moment what mental agony all this succession of trials, first before one judge, then before another, must have caused to our heavenly Lord, whose outward composure was so great, so unbroken, that His silence is five times recorded in the gospel accounts of all that took place.

Then, my brethren, add to all these thoughts this one, that all His judges, instead of being *impartial* administrators of the law, giving, as is but right, the benefit of any doubt in favour of the accused, instead of this, every one of them took part with the populace against Him. The high priest and council are unscrupulous in seeking for *false* witnesses to put Him to death. Of

true accusation there was none to be produced, but so that two persons could but be found who would testify on oath to such crime or fault in Him as would cause death to be recorded against Him, that was all that they cared for or desired. Herod, with all his men of war, set Him at nought, mocked Him, and arraying Him in a white or purple robe—"gorgeous," S. Luke terms it—of royalty, sent Him back through the streets to Pilate. The working of Pilate's mind is most remarkable throughout. That wicked man is especially mentioned as having cruelly slain certain Galileans, and mingled their blood with their sacrifices, the cause, as probably it was, of the enmity between Herod and Pilate. Having been thus unscrupulous in putting innocent persons to death without trial or mercy, the high priest and rulers of the Jews might well have supposed that there would be no difficulty in their procuring the condemnation of the Saviour at their *request*. But not so. Probably at the first glance of the Saviour, particularly if he had heard, as he must have done, of His miracles, there was something which appealed to his better nature. His accusers were called upon to substantiate any charge they had against Him. His first words to them were, "What accusation bring ye against *this* man?" They reply with injured pride, "If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up unto thee." If then they declined to lay the charge before him, Pilate declines having anything to do with the matter, "Take

ye Him, and judge Him according to your law." But they wanted His DEATH, and nothing less, and this was withheld from them by the Romans; so they replied, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." So they find that they *must* lay some definite charge against the Saviour, sufficient to procure His condemnation to death.

And now mark this, the charge for which they the Jews passed sentence of death upon Him, according to their law, would not *avail* before the Roman governor, who cared not for what the Jews termed blasphemy, or that the Saviour had declared Himself openly to be what He was, the Son of God. So that charge must be given up, and a new one substituted. Now it is this: "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute unto Cæsar, saying that He Himself is Christ a King." This claim to be a king was one which Pilate could not pass by, however much he might wish to do so. And yet such a charge coming from such a quarter would of itself excite the governor's suspicion. It was the very object they most desired, to release their country from the rule of Cæsar, and from paying tribute. Pilate at once suspects their sincerity, and sees through their designs. He turns almost in contempt to the poor accused Nazarene, and says, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" To his surprise, the Saviour, instead of disclaiming this title, says, "Thou sayest it"—or the truth, I am

the King of the Jews. Pilate is so struck with this remarkable reply from so remarkable a man, that he takes Him aside to enquire in private what He means. This is the conversation related by S. John towards the close of his 18th chapter. From this private examination of our Lord, Pilate returns, declaring to the Jews, "I find in Him no fault at all." Then intervenes the sending Him to Herod, in hope of Herod's deciding the case one way or other; but from Herod He is returned to Pilate clad in the white or purple robe of a mock royalty.

From this time Pilate, instead of deciding according to his conscience to do what he felt was right, hopes to escape from the importunity of the chief priests by appealing to the crowd, and to satisfy them by inflicting a less punishment than death. Here begins Pilate's downfall. He speaks to the crowd, declaring the Saviour's innocence, confirmed as it had just been by Herod; but as there was this ill and envious feeling against Him, He thinks to satisfy *them* by saying, "I will therefore chastise Him, and release Him." This was done to conciliate the people. It was the lesser punishment, intended to evade the greater, for which they clamoured. But this alternative the Jews reject; something else must be done to satisfy their rage against Him and set Him free. Here comes in the proposal to release Barabbas or Jesus; but to his dismay, the crowd demand, in preference to the Lord Jesus, that the

robber and murderer should be granted to them. "What shall I do then with Jesus?" asks the governor; and the crowd then for the first time mention the word "crucify." Pilate thrice asks, "Why, what evil hath He done?" and adds at the last time, "I have found no cause of death in Him: I will therefore chastise Him, and release Him." The word is repeated, and only the one word—"Crucify, crucify!"

Full of misgivings, the governor, fearing on the one hand an insurrection of the people, in which instead of only one life being sacrificed numbers might fall, but on the other hand shrinking from condemning Jesus to death, washes His hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it." Then cried they all, "His blood be on us, and on our children;" and Pilate delivered Jesus to their will, in the same breath declaring His innocence, but giving up the accused to their infuriated will. At this word the Lord is handed over to the soldiers, to be scourged and ill-treated in ways which it is terrible to relate, and which it will be more suitable for us to dwell upon next time, when this psalm speaks of the Saviour's *bodily* sufferings.

Pilate has degraded his office of judge and governor by delivering an innocent man to execution. But He is fascinated to the spot, or perhaps other causes came before him for trial, and occupied some little time. Meanwhile, after the Saviour is scourged, the Roman

soldiers think to outdo the thought of Herod's men of war. They put on Him a purple robe, and put a reed in His right hand, and plait a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and bow the knee in mockery before Him as a king. Pilate probably sees it all, and sees the silent, meek, unmurmuring, uncomplaining form—His back bleeding from the scourge, His head bleeding from the thorns—and makes a last appeal to the crowd at such a pitiable sight, when, bringing forth the Saviour in this state, he says, "Behold the man"—behold I bring Him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in Him. See how He has suffered! See what an object of pity He is! Cannot you be satisfied with this? I have allowed this in order to please you. Suffer me now to let Him go. But no. The same cry rises into the air from all around for the third time—"Crucify Him, crucify Him!" Pilate's every effort to release Him is baffled, and He yields with a bad grace, saying, "Take ye Him, and crucify Him: for I find no fault in Him."

Then comes out the first original accusation, which has been kept in the background before Pilate: "We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself *the Son of God.*" Pilate, being the more afraid, again questions with Him privately, thus tries again to turn the people to relent, but again and finally yields on their reply—"If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king

speaketh against Cæsar." The risk of being thus accused to the emperor overcomes the last resistance of Pilate, and he delivers up Jesus to be crucified.

The object I have had in view in thus dwelling upon the words of this 22nd Psalm is, as I stated at first, to fix your hearts and minds, my brethren, during these weeks before Easter, the more forcibly and principally upon the Saviour's passion. We have cast one thought upon His agony of *soul* when He exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" to-day we have cast one thought upon the terrible *mental* sufferings which the Saviour endured on that great day of our redemption at the hands of men, even of the rulers of the people. We have scarcely touched upon the bodily pains and wounds He endured for us, which I leave till next time. Let us try to-day to enter into His sorrows of *mind*. They are even more hard to bear than bodily suffering, especially to those who are good, and holy, and unselfish. To find one's self falsely accused of some great wickedness; to have one trial after another to pass through, one judge desiring to find the accused guilty, another judge declaring His innocence again and again, but condemning Him to insult, suffering, and death; to feel deserted by every friend we ever had in the world; to have a robber and a murderer preferred to one who had spent His years on earth only in doing good; to be sold for a trifling sum of silver by one's own daily companion and friend; what a thousand arrows

of sorrow must have penetrated that mighty heart! All for our sake; for us it was with Him, as the psalmist speaks in my text. "But as for me, I am a worm, and no man; a very scorn of men, and the outcast of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out their lips, and shake their heads, saying, He trusted in God that He would deliver him: let Him deliver him, if He will have him."

SERMON XXVIII.

"*They pierced my hands and my feet.*"—PSALM xxii. 17.

THESE few words describe the Lord's mode of death as accurately as it could be described at a time when probably such a mode of death as crucifixion was entirely unknown to David—"They pierced my hands and my feet." This was the last act of bodily suffering which the Saviour had to undergo for us. It lasted till the moment came when He commended His spirit into the Father's hand and gave up the Ghost. I have tried to direct your thoughts to the intense suffering in *soul* which our Lord endured for sinners when God laid on Him the iniquity of us all, and the sensible consolations of His divine nature were for the moment withdrawn, that He might indeed "taste death for every man." After that I directed your thoughts to some of the sorrows of *mind* which He endured for us, though these, too, it is impossible for us wholly to enter into—the bitterness of betrayal by Judas, of denial by S. Peter, of desertion on the part of all the twelve, the terrible ordeal of passing through several distinct ex-

aminations; viz., before Annas, then before Caiaphas and the Council, before Pilate, before Herod, and again before Pilate, the cry of the crowd demanding from all sides His cruel death, the preference of a robber and a murderer to Him, the Lord of life and King of kings, the being put to death between two malefactors, one on each side of Him. I say, with what infinite sorrow must these things have penetrated that mighty heart, independent of those more *spiritual* sufferings of soul, as the one great sacrifice for all sin, and the terrible *bodily* pains, which it is right we should also bear in mind when fixing our thoughts upon the cross.

We know that our Lord had power to lay down His life, and to take it again, and that He did both by His own almighty power. There was something so marvellous in our Lord's act of dying, that it is recorded by S. Mark: "When the centurion, which stood over against Him, saw that He so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God." His own innate power of life and death was shown at that moment, proving His voluntary act in dying; or, looking at His sufferings in a *human* point of view, we can scarcely wonder that His spirit had not fled *sooner*, rather than that He expired so soon. There was no part in His human frame which had not undergone its own terrible suffering. The very pores of His skin had yielded a sweat of *blood;* His *head* had bled from the crown of thorns, driven the more cruelly in by the

reed which for a moment they put in His right hand; His *face* had been blindfolded and buffeted by the soldiers, who struck Him with the palms of their hands; His *back* had been torn by the scourge; His *shoulder* galled with the instrument of His own death, which, it would appear, He Himself bore through the streets of Jerusalem; but when, at the gate of the city, He fell beneath its weight, they laid it upon Simon a Cyrenian.

It is remarkable to notice at this point, that our blessed Lord seems to have fallen under His cross, and to have been unable through weakness after that to walk alone; for whereas the evangelists relate at first that they *led* Him out to crucify Him, S. Mark afterwards changes this expression, and speaks of their "*bearing*" Him to the place of execution, as though He could no longer *walk* unsupported. So true are the words of this psalm just before my text: "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart also in the midst of my body is even like melting wax. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my gums."

At last "They pierced my hands and my feet." You all know how true a description this is of the Saviour's *mode* of death—the whole weight of the body depending upon the nails which penetrated His hands and His feet; so that we oftentimes use the word "excruciating" (perhaps without our thinking that it means nailing to a cross) to signify the *greatest* pain which a person can

ever undergo. Nor should we, while dwelling upon the mutilation of our blessed Saviour's sacred person, forget that after death a soldier with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith, like the rock smitten by Moses in the wilderness, when the people were dying of thirst, came forth a flowing stream of blood and water—the sacramental water of our regeneration, the sacred, precious blood in which whosoever is washed is made white and clean before God.

It is terrible to us to witness, or reflect upon afterward, any great sufferings amongst men; to see, *e.g.* a little child undergoing some terrible agony of pain, or one of maturer years groaning and scarcely able to speak from some one great cause of agony and suffering. How often in after years do the sufferings of near relations we have lost, which were only ended by death, rise up in our memory, when we would gladly put the remembrance of them aside as too sad for us to contemplate. But it is not so with the Saviour's sufferings. It is good for us, my brethren, to dwell upon them. It is very right and necessary that we should try to realize in some little measure what He went through, because it was all for us, and for our sakes. The memory of it magnifies His love towards us. S. Paul uses this very argument when he says, "Peradventure for a *good* man some would even dare to die." There have been instances often in the world of a parent giving his own life to save his child's life, or of the son

giving himself for his father; but this, great and noble as it is, does not in the smallest degree equal or represent the Saviour's act in dying for us. In the first place He had to *become* man, that He might die. As God, He is incapable of suffering or death; but He became man that in His perfect human nature, ever joined to His divine nature, and never to be separated from it, He might suffer and die. He came down from His throne of glory to this lower, sinful world for this very end. He emptied Himself of His glory, and took upon Himself the form of a servant: "Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich."

And who were we for whom He did this mighty deed of love? "He is not ashamed to call us brethren;" but were *we* so by nature when He came, for whom He came? Oh no! Here is the great distinguishing mark and proof of the Saviour's love. "We were *enemies* to Him by wicked works." "There is none good; no, not one." We were not His *friends*, but the objects of the Father's displeasure. Inevitable ruin pervaded the whole world. Nothing but eternal death was due to us, and to be expected. And it was when we were thus that Christ came, and came to die, "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh." Surely it is the effect in every true heart, in every noble nature, to feel love and gratitude to them who love us, and who show their love by

many infallible proofs. How horrible to resist the flow of love to ourselves—to turn our backs upon our benefactors, carelessly and without concern! It is almost impossible to resist for ever the love and kindness of those who strive to do us good. And it is just *this* motive which ought to turn our love supremely to the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour. I say, we OUGHT to dwell upon His sufferings; we OUGHT to call them to mind, to meditate upon them, to recount them to one another, because they were all undergone for you, for me, for each *one* of us, as though none else existed in the world but ourselves alone.

We know not but that Christ our Lord would have gone through all as He did, so great is His love to us, if there had been but *one* soul to save—only one! There is no limit to His love. He regards us individually, and He puts this extreme value upon each single soul when He said, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the *whole* world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his *soul?*" And again, when He says, "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." It is then good, my brethren, for ourselves, and only right towards our blessed Saviour, that we should fix our thoughts and minds *frequently* upon His sufferings for our sakes. For us He was born; for us He lived on earth; for us He died.

When we repeat again and again in the creed, "I believe in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried;" or again, when we plead thus in the Litany—"By thine agony and bloody sweat; by thy cross and passion; by thy precious death and burial, good Lord deliver us"—let us form a habit in our minds of realizing for the moment the great facts we are rehearsing in those words. Let them not be in our minds simple *historical* facts, which we hear of and speak about as we may do of any great battle, and the suffering it entails; but let us continually awaken in our hearts a new and lively sense of *our own* share and part in each and every particular of the Saviour's life and death. It is good for us to dwell upon it. Love begets love. As He loved us so supremely, so must we, with all our best powers of mind and body, of soul and spirit, love Him in return.

Nothing is too hard for true love to aim at and strive to do. And he who loves his Saviour most is most loved of Him. Of all the twelve, we know that He loved them unto the end; but out of their number S. John most of all. Judas, we may be sure, least of all, and in quite a different sense from His love for S. John. And so with us. Christ loves them most who love Him most; and they love Him most who feel and know best what He has done for their souls. As He said to Simon,

"There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged." Let us learn that we are the debtors to whom by Christ's passion, not the fifty pence, but the five hundred pence, have been remitted. We are they to whom hell was due, but to whom heaven is opened. "When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers." We are they who were doomed to die; but Christ hath set us free from the law of sin and death. He was made sin, or a sin-offering, for us. He took the sinner's place, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Thus I say, my brethren, it is excellent for us to fix our thoughts and minds on the Saviour's cross and passion. His love for us will surely beget love in our cold hearts. He will draw us to Himself; as He said, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." My brethren, let us be drawn unto Him.

We are specially called to stand beside His cross from now till Easter; only let no man say, I love the Lord Jesus Christ, unless He is daily trying to do more and more all that the Lord Jesus Christ would have him do. "If ye love me," He says, "keep my command-

ments." This is to be the proof of our love to Him. This is the test which He will apply to every one of us at the judgment-day. There is one last command which He gave to every believer in Him the night before He suffered, and it is this—"Do this in remembrance of me." Alas! by how many of you is this law disregarded, never done, continually omitted? "But turn thou us, O good Lord, and so we shall be turned; and be not extreme to mark what we have hitherto done amiss."

SERMON XXIX.

"*They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.*"
PSALM xxii. 18.

WE have considered from this psalm, however imperfectly, three special forms of our Saviour's dreadful sufferings for us men; viz., His sufferings first in soul, secondly in mind or spirit, and thirdly in body. I reminded you on Sunday last how His sacred *person* was torn and mutilated by cruel men; His head bleeding from the crown of thorns; His face bruised by the blows of the soldiers who, when they had blindfolded Him, struck Him with the palms of their hands; His back torn by the scourge; His shoulder galled by the weight of His own cross; His parched tongue cleaving to the roof of His mouth; His hands and His feet were pierced by the nails which fastened Him to the cross; while *before* all these bodily pains began the very pores of His skin had yielded a sweat of blood, which dropped down on the ground; and, after all was over, His side was pierced with the spear, and out flowed the sacramental stream of blood and water by which His Church is regenerated and made to live the new life of the Spirit.

In the midst of all this, which this 22nd Psalm describes in the very words used round the cross, or in the account given us in the several gospels of its various incidents, I say, in the midst of all these sad but most mighty events, we should hardly expect to find such a verse or incident as this—"They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." What should make it worth while to make any mention of the clothes of a poor man in vile raiment at the moment of His execution? We hear nothing of the clothes of the two thieves who were crucified at the same time, at the same place; yet they were probably of more value to the outward eye than the Saviour's bodily raiment could have been. Yet of them nothing is said; but of *His* raiment there is this prophecy written a thousand years before, and fulfilled at the moment to the very letter, "They part my garments, and cast lots upon my vesture." *Every one* of the four evangelists mention this dividing of the Saviour's garments among the soldiers; S. John, however, giving us the fullest account, telling us their number, and one reason at least why this was done; viz., in order that the Scripture—the word of God—might be fulfilled to the letter. This is S. John's account: "Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Him, took His garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also His coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore

among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: *that the Scripture might be fulfilled, which saith,* They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did." Here, then, were five garments, four being divided, one to each of the four soldiers who crucified Him; the other outer garment remained untorn, altogether one, and allotted to one of them by casting lots for it. This *little* circumstance, as we may think it, would be worthy of our attentive consideration even if it had been mentioned only by one evangelist; but when anything is mentioned by *all four* evangelists, there is always some reason of a most important kind, some particular meaning, or a thousand meanings in the circumstance, which at *first* sight may not be apparent.

And of all works which the hand of man had ever wove, none to us who believe could be so noble, so precious, so valuable, so honourable, as the very garments which the Saviour had Himself worn up to the very moment of His crucifixion. Our love and our awe of Him would lead us to honour the least thing connected with Him—the Lord of life. We as Christians should love and honour those poor robes more than all the glorious apparel which even Solomon in his days of grandeur ever wore. But there is one thought to make us regard these poor earthly things with still greater reverence and awe. The Saviour's garments are mentioned on three other occasions. One day a poor

crippled woman made her way through the crowd, and came behind Him in the press, saying to herself, as she found to be altogether true, "If I may but touch the hem of His garment, I shall be whole;" and she touched it, and was instantly cured. This undivided garment was probably the very one she touched; not the Saviour's person, not by a word from the Saviour's mouth, but unknown as it appeared to others, this poor woman, having but faith enough to come behind and touch the hem of that garment—now divided among His crucifiers—that healed her.

Again: "And when the men of that place had knowledge of Him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto Him all that were diseased; and besought Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole."

And once more—shortly before the crucifixion, when the disciples' minds were to be directed into the knowledge of His death and resurrection on the holy mount, when His face shone like lightning, and Moses and Elias appeared and talked with Him of His approaching end—we read of these garments of His thus: "His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them." (S. Mark ix.) S. Matthew says, "His face did shine as the sun, and *His raiment was white* as the light."

Many of us, my brethren, alas! have not faith enough

in our hearts to believe in the inward grace and gifts of the sacraments, though they were instituted by Christ Himself to convey grace to our souls. How much less should we have esteemed His poor garments to be so honourable and glorious! If we so feel, depend upon it *we* should have behaved round the cross like these soldiers. We should have claimed these garments, and divided them as common things amongst ourselves, though once they had shone to the eyes of believers like the light, and brighter, and once at least by simply touching them through faith, a poor crippled woman had been healed in a moment of her long infirmity, and a number of sick on another occasion.

Well, but now why should there be such express mention by all the four evangelists of their Lord's garments, and how they were disposed of?

First of all I would give the reason assigned by S. John, "that the Scripture might be fulfilled." You see the importance of this verse which I have taken as my text to-day. God had said by David a thousand years before this time, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." And this *must* be fulfilled, because it is God's word, and God's word is truth, and can never fail. Whatever God has said shall happen, *must* happen. Sooner or later His least word comes to pass. All is fulfilled. So it will be true in the end. "We shall not all sleep (*i.e.* in the grave), but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in

the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we (if alive on earth) shall be changed." This for one reason.

Another may be this. It is another point which brings together in some sort of resemblance the first Adam and the second Adam, the new head of man's race. As the first Adam fell into a deep sleep, and from his side then opened Eve was formed, so when the second Adam fell into His deep sleep upon the cross, *His* side also was opened, and forthwith came thereout blood and water, whereby the bride of Christ, the Church, is formed, and all souls of the faithful are regenerated, receive remission of sins, and are made to live. And so of the Saviour's garments. When the Lord God drove man out of paradise, He made them, we are told, coats of skins, probably of the skins of those beasts which were first slain in token of the great sacrifice of the cross; and now, when the New Adam was about to re-enter paradise, He *sheds off* those garments wherewith man had clothed himself since the fall. There is a beautiful passage in the writings of S. Athanasius, to whom one of the creeds in our Prayer-book is attributed, upon this point he says, "He laid aside His garments; for it was meet that, in leading men into paradise, He should unclothe Himself of those garments which Adam received when he was cast out of paradise. For when Adam sinned, and was thereafter to die,

he received coats of skins, which were made of dead animals, and were the symbols of the dying which had come upon him on account of sin. But the Lord in taking upon Himself all things for our sakes, clothed Himself with these in order that He might also strip Himself of the same, and instead of these might clothe us with *life* and immortality."

This, then, for a second reason: it brings together in a peculiar way the first Adam and the second Adam. The one leaving paradise, the other about to enter into paradise, as He said to the penitent thief: "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

Thirdly, there are five garments in all. Four were divided among the four soldiers who crucified Him; one was not to be divided, but to be surrendered *whole* by the others to one of the four, after casting lots whose it should be. Four is the number or symbol of man, and of the world; one is the number and symbol of God. The one undivided garment declares the unity of the Church, the four parted among the soldiers its universality. There are four gospels, but the four are still one gospel. There are four quarters of the globe, yet still but one earth, over which the Church of Christ is to spread—north, south, east, and west—"till the earth is full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Still that Church is but *one* Church, with one faith, one Lord as her head,

one baptism, one hope, one eucharistic feast. So that in the end God will gather together His elect from the four winds, and make them all to be "one fold under one shepherd."

And yet once more. As this one undivided garment of Christ covered all the rest, so there is among the gifts and fruits of the Spirit one gift, one grace, which is better than all others, above all others, over all others, as the apostle says: "And above all things (or *over* all things), put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness;" or again, "There remaineth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." Love will cover us when everything else has perished. "Charity shall cover the multitude of sins." It will remain when all else is past and gone. When faith is lost in sight, and hope is lost in enjoyment, yet love will still remain. "Little children, love one another: for God is love; and he that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." It alone makes us on earth in any measure like unto God in heaven.

Let us then for a moment suppose, if this soldier to whom the undivided garment fell by lot was ever allowed or ever dared to cover himself with that robe without seam, the hem of which the woman and a multitude of sick had touched in faith, and had been healed in touching it—that garment which on the holy mount had shone like the light, and brighter than the sun, let us see in this crucifier of the Lord, wearing that Lord's garment,

a type of Christ's love and forgiveness to all sinners; how He is willing to throw around them the robe of His own righteousness, and make us to be "accepted in Him the beloved." If this does not shield us in the day of judgment, *nothing* will. If the Saviour's merits do not atone for us in the hour of our greatest need, nothing will. If the cross does not bring us to salvation, "there is no other name given under heaven whereby we may be saved, but only the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

And now, my brethren, this week, and this day in particular (Good Friday), is as good a test as you can possibly put to yourselves, of your share in Christ's work, of your love and gratitude to Him who died for you, of your trust, and faith, and hope in Him for salvation. If you are not *much* with Christ your Saviour in heart and spirit, day by day during this week in which He died, you will not be much with Him in heart and spirit, depend upon it, during ANY week of the whole year. If we do not keep holy week holily, and watch with Christ this one hour in the year, and meditate upon His passion, and example, and love, as best we can, depend upon it we shall not do so during *any* other week in the whole year.

But in one way let us all be *like* these four soldiers, and claim to ourselves something, everything we can that is Christ's—wrap ourselves in the robe of His righteousness, cover ourselves with the one undivided

garment of a true and living charity. We need not cast lots for it, whose it shall be, it is for *all*, it is for *each*. "Yea, Christ died for all men, that we which live should not henceforth live unto ourselves; but unto Him who died for us, and *rose again*."

SERMON XXX.

"*All they that go down into the dust shall kneel before Him: and no man hath quickened his own soul.*"—PSALM xxii. 30.

I HAVE already stated how this great psalm is divided into two distinct parts. All down to the 22nd verse relates to our Lord's passion; all the verses after the 21st to the resurrection, and the Church of Christ founded upon that chief of Christian truths. There is a certain implied life beyond the grave in this verse which I have chosen for my text: "All they that go down into the dust shall kneel before Him: and no man hath quickened his own soul." This, I say, implies that after the original sentence upon sin—"Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return"—has been carried out in all of us, still there is declared to be a life beyond. It implies some sort of worship—they are to "kneel before Him." It is not to be confined to *some;* it is said "*all* shall kneel before Him."

And then, to enforce this, something of the same kind is repeated in the next sentence: "No man hath quickened His own soul." This implies that the souls

of men shall be quickened, or made to live; but not by any power of their own. And thus these words lead us on at once to Christ and His resurrection, and our own resurrection through Him; and thus, as the former part of this psalm has been most profitable for our thoughts during Lent and Holy Week, this latter part of it is most suitable for Easter, when our chief thought is, the resurrection of Christ, and hereafter of all men. But first, the words of the 22nd verse have most clearly reference to the great Easter-day. The psalmist says, "I will declare thy name unto my *brethren;* in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee." The gospels repeat the former part of these words twice over in the short description which we have in them of the resurrection; first to Mary Magdalene the Lord Himself, according to S. John, says, "Go to my *brethren,* and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God;" then, according to S. Matthew, as the women went by order of the angel at the tomb to tell His disciples of the Lord's resurrection, "behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my *brethren* that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me."

It is surely very remarkable, that whereas the angel uses the word "disciples," the Saviour Himself uses the word in my text—"brethren." "He is not ashamed to

call them brethren," as S. Paul declares to the Hebrews, using the very words of this psalm. Then, on the very same evening, we have the words, "In the midst of the Church (or congregation)." The psalm says: "In the midst of the Church (or congregation) will I praise Thee." S. Luke tells us that while the two disciples were relating to the apostles the wonderful appearance of the Saviour in the way to Emmaus, and how He was known of them in the breaking of bread, we read: "As they thus spake, Jesus Himself stood *in the midst* of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." After this there is a special reference to the sacrifice of praise and to a feast, at which "the poor shall eat, and be satisfied: they that seek after the Lord shall praise Him; your heart shall live for ever."

This will appear to us as a very clear reference to the gospel, with its fulness of blessing, if we consider how frequently a reference is made in one way or other to a feast as descriptive of the kingdom of heaven. Thus in S. Matthew there is the parable of the marriage feast of the king's son; in S. Luke, the great supper; in both of which many guests are invited, but excuse themselves at the last moment from coming. There are the two miracles of feeding the five thousand and feeding the four thousand in the wilderness on five and seven loaves, which multiplied as they were broken and blessed by the Saviour. In one parable we read of the fatted calf being killed

and eaten; another place it is said, "Blessed is He that shall eat bread in the kingdom of heaven."

Again, a great part of our Lord's teaching was delivered at feasts: *e.g.* His first miracle was done at the marriage feast at Cana; His last leave-taking of the disciples was at the last supper, the night before He suffered. There is a feast at the house of Simon the leper, at the house of Levi, of Zaccheus, of Martha and Mary, and of a Pharisee more than once. And after His resurrection there is the supper with the two disciples at Emmaus; there is the supper related by S. Luke, when "He did eat before them;" there is the supper by the borders of the lake of Gennesaret, as recorded in the last chapter of S. John. And to all times the Lord's promise is made in these terms: "If any man open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Thus this verse also clearly refers to the gospel.

Next, it is here said: "All the ends of the world shall remember themselves, and be turned unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Him." They, like the prodigal son, shall come to themselves, and say, "I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." But before this can come to pass in any nation, we must do as the Lord bade when He left us—"Go into all the world, and make disciples

of all nations, baptizing them, and teaching them to observe all things that He has commanded us."

And then we come to the verse which I have specially chosen as my text, because it speaks to us at this Easter-tide of life beyond the grave: "All they that go down into the dust shall kneel before Him: and no man hath quickened his own soul." Christ is, we all know, "the first-fruits of them that slept." He rose from the dead, and quickened His own soul into life by *His own* divine power. No mere man can quicken his own soul; but Christ restored Himself to life because He was the eternal Son of God, of one substance with the Father, having taken our manhood into His own nature as God; therefore He *raised Himself* to life. It was not possible that death should hold Him. It needed no voice from heaven bidding the dead to rise.

He had submitted to death to pay for us the full penalty for sin, and to satisfy the justice and wrath of Almighty God; but He raised Himself to life again before His flesh saw corruption, after He had fulfilled all that was necessary, and all that He had promised to do. Thus He came back into life the same person that He was before, though now made spiritual, deathless, and full of glory. When Thomas doubted of His resurrection, and determined not to be convinced unless he saw and touched the very marks of the nails in His hands and feet, and the wound from the spear in His side, the Lord suddenly appeared in the midst of them, and in-

vited him to do exactly as he had desired. True, He was now so spiritualized that He could pass out of, and into, the midst of them when the doors were closed, appearing in one place, and then vanishing out of their sight; still He was to the hands, and eyes, and ears of the apostles the same Jesus which was crucified, in whom we believe. He "quickened His own soul;" He brought both body and soul back into life. He raised Himself. His human soul returned from the world of spirits, to whom He went and preached. His body shook off the grave-clothes with which He was bound, and passed out of the tomb hewn out of the solid rock, and escaped "as a bird out of the snare of the fowler."

And thus our Jesus is alive for evermore. He is passed into the heavens; but He is still touched with the feeling of our infirmities; He is still all He was while on earth; He is still *man*, but the King of kings at God's right hand, all power in heaven and earth being given over to Him. And thus both God and man, exalted above every name, yet He is our Priest in heaven, offering up continually before the Father the memorials of His passion for us; pleading *for* us, and *with* us; joining His prayers to ours, and making them acceptable through the never-failing efficacy of the sacrifice of Himself.

And as *He* is, so shall we, each in our measure, be like Him at our own resurrection from the grave. We wonder perhaps when we reflect how our bodies crumble

into dust, so that we cannot tell them from the ordinary ground of our churchyard. But though we see not the difference, God sees and marks every particle of earth which once formed a part of some human body. And He, my brethren, who in the beginning formed us out of the dust of the earth will re-form, re-make, re-unite our mortal bodies. It is not harder, surely, to re-make than it was at first to create these earthly forms in which we live, and move, and have our being. The dry roots, the hard and bare branches of trees, the dead grass and lilies of the field, which now are putting forth their new life, and renew their beauty after the deadness of winter, remind us year by year of that mighty restoration to life which we shall each of us take part in when those who are alive at the moment of the Lord's coming shall be changed in a moment from mortality to immortality—from natural bodies into spiritual; and they who "are in their graves shall all hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation."

Never let us forget that the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the dead does not mean only that the spirits and souls of men will return to life, but their *bodies* also shall rise again. It is a fundamental article of our creed, that we believe in the resurrection of the body; for this it is which makes our human

bodies so sacred, so to be cared for. They are the temples of the Holy Ghost, who dwelleth in us; and it might matter little how we treated them, if they were to crumble into dust, but were never again to be restored to life and being. But it is not so. We know, if the world lasts but a few years longer, every one of us who are here to-day, like those who have gone before, will pass out of sight; our souls will be separated from our bodies; the body shall return to the dust out of which we are made, and to which we belong; and our spirit shall return unto God that made it. But this separation is only temporary. They will be reunited, and brought back again.

Just as the Saviour bore and bears in His hands, and feet, and side the marks of the cross received while He was on earth; so we shall live again in these same bodies which we now call our own, only changed and spiritualized, so as to enjoy for ever and ever the pleasures which are at God's right hand, or to suffer for ever and ever the endless torments of God's wrath in the lake that burneth with fire. All they that go down into the dust shall kneel before Him. My brethren, let us live with these thoughts ever before us; live in the hope of the life eternal; live for the kingdom of the resurrection. It is but for a little while that we are thus preparing. The end will be endless—full of joy or full of misery for every soul. We must try more and more to live the risen life now; to let the Saviour

see in us of the fruit of His passion; to be like Him in all our thoughts, and works, and ways. Then—and it is a most blessed thought for us—then it shall be true in us—"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." "As one star differeth from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead."

SERMON XXXI.

"*The Lord is my shepherd; therefore can I lack nothing. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff comfort me. Thy loving-kindness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*"

PSALM xxiii. 1, 4, 6.

THESE are the three verses which appear to me most striking in this short psalm. It is one of those psalms which has *more especially* brought consolation to the dying Christian in thousands upon thousands of instances; and if we think well over the words, I think we shall all more and more see how very much there is contained in them for our comfort and support, especially when death is in sight. As regards the first verse, what is not contained in these words of it—"The Lord is my shepherd; therefore can I lack nothing"? The title of shepherd is the very name which our Lord has especially taken to Himself, as we read in the gospel of S. John, "I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep. . . . As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And

other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." Thus, as our heavenly Lord calls Himself by this name, it cannot be otherwise than right that we should say with David, and think of it with thankfulness, "The Lord is my shepherd." He it is who goeth after each lost sheep until He find it; and when He findeth it, He layeth it on His shoulder, and bringeth it home, rejoicing that He has found His sheep which was lost. The whole Bible is full of such references to Christ and His people as is contained under the idea of a shepherd and His flock. Most of the great and good men who in one way or other have been types of Christ our Saviour have been *shepherds*; *e.g.* Abel, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and David, were all men engaged in feeding their flocks when God called them severally to the great part which they have fulfilled in His dealings with man. And when Isaiah would describe the Saviour's gentleness and goodness toward man he uses this simile: "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arms, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." And the last instance which I will name is that description of the great judgment-day which our Lord gives us in S. Matthew xxv., saying, "Before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from

the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left." Thus the thought contained in the first verse of this 23rd Psalm begins, we may say, with Abel, and continues up to the very moment when eternal life will begin to them that are saved.

Feeling this then, my brethren, to be our relationship to Christ our heavenly Lord, and His relationship to us —He our Shepherd, we the sheep of His flock—it is indeed ours to say, if it be so, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me." When that hour of death draws nigh, then, if never before, we all find out to the full what it is to have Christ with us, or to have lived our life on earth without Christ; then it is that a man must realize the solitariness and separateness of his true state in this world. While we are in health and strength, while we are busy in the world, fulfilling our works and duties in life, it is hard for us to separate ourselves in any measure from others, to look upon ourselves otherwise than as one of a multitude. Every day we live we are each of us both giving to others and receiving influence of some kind from those around us. The leaven of good or the leaven of evil is at work in each of us; we know not how. We seldom perceive or know what others have done for us, or we for others. But when the spirit of a man is about to separate itself from the frail temple of this earthly body in which we

live, and move, and have our being, then it is that our solitariness and separateness from all others comes home to us. And thus many when they are dying cannot bear to be left alone. They cling to those about them the more closely the sooner they are about to leave them; they like to feel that they are watched and cared for day and night by some friend or relation. What so sad, we sometimes think, as to die alone! to have passed away at sea, or in a wilderness, or in the night, whilst others slept! for them to come to our bedside in the morning, and to find that the spirit has returned to God who gave it, and that its earthly tenement must at once be prepared for its narrow grave! But such thoughts, my friends, need never disturb us, if we are in deed and in truth living our life in this world by faith in Jesus Christ our Lord—trying to love and serve Him more and more, trying to grow in grace, and faithfully using His gifts to us of prayer, of His word, and, above all, of His holy sacrament. If this be so with us, let us not bestow too many thoughts upon our end; let us not be in anywise careful or anxious where or when we shall die; how death will overtake us, or what we shall then see, and know, and feel.

Let this be our consolation, whether we are, as it may be, at this moment very near our end, or have yet many long years, as this world counts them to be, between us and the grave. Here is our consolation, if we love the

Lord Jesus Christ with all our hearts—"The Lord is my shepherd." "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: FOR thou art with me."

All is safe and well if Christ be with us and in us. The disciples feared for the little vessel on the sea of Galilee, while the storm raged and they were in jeopardy, and the Lord lay asleep on a pillow in the hinder part of the vessel. They wake Him at last, saying, "Lord, save us: we perish." But He rebuked their needless fears from lack of faith, and commanded the winds and the sea: "Peace, be still," and in a moment there was a great calm; they were safe, though they knew it not. So with S. Peter when he left the boat and walked on the water to go to Jesus. So with S. Stephen when he kneeled down and fell beneath the shower of stones; but ere he did so saw heaven opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, ready to receive and welcome His first martyr. So with S. Paul, and so with all God's saints in each hour of trial.

We have nothing to fear, IF we bear Christ in us, the hope of glory. Nothing can really come amiss, nothing can really harm us. As He said Himself, "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." Or as S. Paul says, "All things work together for good to them that love God." This it is which makes the Holy Sacrament so *essentially* necessary to every Christian. Without it we cannot have any real, sure, abiding pre-

sence of Christ in us. It is so, and so only, that Jesus Christ comes down from heaven to live and dwell more and more in the souls of His faithful people. It is, He says, "the bread of heaven." "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever." "Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." Unless we thus fulfil again and again the Saviour's dying command, we may not venture to use with the full assurance of faith such words as these: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me."

But let us for a moment dwell upon the blessings promised in the concluding verses of this psalm, to them that love the Lord Jesus our Shepherd, in them and with them. Here in this world, as the very next verse says, He will prepare for them again and again "a table" and a "cup," anointing them with the unction of His Holy Spirit, preventing them with His goodness, "following them with His loving-kindness and mercy all the days of their life." And this after all is the least part of all He does for them. For as the apostle says, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, *and of that which is to come.*"

This, my brethren, is the great end, and hope, and object which we have in view. It is not merely that sin brings with it, as we daily see, great sickness and

sorrows, and shortens many a man's life; nor, on the other hand, that God so often bestows even *earthly* blessings, none of which can any of us in the least degree deserve, upon them that try to love, and serve, and fear Him in this world. It is not only this, I say, but there is infinitely more for us to hope for, and wait for, and look forward to, and it is this, as this psalm says, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord *for ever*." God's house is that eternal and glorious kingdom which Christ our Lord has in store for all believers. He calls it so Himself, when He says, "In my Father's *house* are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." It is *this* home, *this* house, for which, brethren, if we are true and faithful servants of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we are waiting, and hoping, and preparing ourselves, and are being prepared for in ourselves. We do not see the change which day by day, week by week, is being done in any of us to fit us for the life to come. We do not even notice the perpetual change which is ever taking place in our outward form and aspect. Could we put ourselves back for a moment, or forward for a moment, ten years or more, then we should indeed see, externally at least, the changes which that lapse of time has made in us; but we do *not* perceive it because it so silently goes on in us. How much

less then can we see the change in that unsubstantial part of us which, like the air we breathe, is unseen and unperceived. Yet still that change works in us, and goes forward more and more. God's Spirit is never at rest in any soul in which He lives and dwells. It is His own secret operation in us to subdue our sins, to increase our holiness, to bring forth in us more and more all the fruits of righteousness and of faith, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the praise and glory of God. Only let us yield ourselves to Him, let us give ourselves to God by a direct *act* of our own will and heart, and then *we* may say, and thankfully remember, these words as belonging to us: "Thy loving-kindness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

SERMON XXXII.

"*Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.*"—PSALM xxiv. 7.

THE psalm from which these words are taken was composed by David, and used in the solemn removal of the ark of God to its fixed place on mount Sion. The circumstance of its removal is related in 2 Sam. vi. David collected thirty thousand men of Israel together to remove the ark of God in as solemn a manner as possible from Baale of Judah. "And David" (goes on the account) "played before the Lord on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals. And when they came to Nachon's threshing-floor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God. . . . And David was afraid of the Lord that day, and said, How shall the ark of the Lord come to me? So David would not remove the ark of the Lord unto him into the city of David: but David

carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. And the ark of the Lord continued in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months: and the Lord blessed Obed-edom, and all his household. And it was told king David, saying, The Lord hath blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with gladness."

This account explains to us the occasion when this psalm was first used; and it also explains to us why it lays so much stress upon holiness and reverence in approaching God, when we hear how God struck Uzzah dead because he put forth his hand and touched the ark when it was shaken. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?" it says, "or who shall rise up in His holy place? Even he that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; and that hath not lift up his mind unto vanity, nor sworn to deceive his neighbour. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation." Then as the procession reached the top of mount Sion they sang, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." And the Levites from within reply, "Who is the King of glory?" Then the procession round the ark answered, "It is the Lord strong and mighty, even the Lord mighty in battle."

This then is the first meaning of this psalm, and the first occasion, we may believe, on which it was used. But next we must apply it to the glorious event which we commemorate on this great and holy festival of the Church. It is for this reason that this psalm is one of those selected for Ascension-day, because it is believed to be both a prophecy and a description of our Lord's ascension into heaven on the fortieth day after Easter, and again at the end of the world after the day of judgment. You will see that the first words of my text are repeated in the ninth verse; and the answer is nearly, though not quite, the same as in the verse which ends my text. To this first question, "Who is this King of glory?" the answer is, "It is the Lord strong and mighty, even the Lord mighty in battle." But the second time the question is asked the answer is, "Even the Lord of hosts" (*i.e.* of multitudes), "He is the King of glory."

Our thoughts and hearts, my brethren, must take us back to-day to that last scene of Christ's visible presence upon earth, when on the holy mount the Lord Jesus stood surrounded by the eleven apostles. He there gave them His last solemn commands, and spake of the things concerning the kingdom of God. There He bade them not to leave Jerusalem before the Holy Ghost had come upon them; there He bade them "go into all the world, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them;" and there "He lifted up His hands,

and blessed them," and as He was so doing, His feet ceased to press the earth, and He ascended up in His own royal majesty till a bright cloud received Him out of their sight; and then two angels in white appeared, and told them that this same Jesus which was so taken up to heaven should come again from heaven in like manner as they had seen Him go into heaven. And at that glorious moment, like the procession of the ark to mount Zion when it reached the top of the hill, so now we must suppose that the doorkeepers of heaven, full of astonishment that one in man's form and nature should thus claim admittance into the heaven of heavens, with the voices of attendant angels crying out around Him, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in," they ask from within, "Who is this King of glory?" And the answer is, "The Lord strong and mighty, even the Lord mighty in battle"—the Lord our Saviour; He who has been put to death as man, but has overcome death; He who has been tempted of Satan, but has subdued his power; He who has endured the cross, but has conquered through suffering, and "hath opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers." Thus is our Jesus rightly called here "the King of glory, the Lord strong and mighty, even the Lord mighty in battle."

But then the promise is, that He who is so gone up from us to-day shall come again in like manner; and

when He returns after that second coming of His to earth, He will then take back with Him into heaven all the redeemed of earth. They will have been summoned from their graves, and been separated from the heathen who know not God, and from those wicked who have rejected Him from themselves, and will rise with the Lord into the air—a vast multitude, whom no man can number, from all the families and regions of the earth—and ascend with Him in glory. They will go up with the Lord, and enter with Him within the gates of heaven.

It will be a glorious sight indeed for those to see who shall form a part of that procession of the saints. The Lord will *then* ascend, not as the Lord victorious over sin, and death, and hell, as at the first Ascension-day, but as "the Lord of HOSTS," now carrying with Him the fruits of His passion and resurrection; *i.e.* all who have been sanctified on earth through the gift and power of the Holy Ghost. Thus it is, brethren, a very holy and glorious subject which this festival of the Church brings to mind. It tells us of our King, our Head, our Lord in heaven, who is pleading day by day with the Father for us on earth, while we commemorate again and again from time to time His death and passion in the blessed sacrament which He ordained for this end. He tells us and assures us of *our* ascension into heaven, if we, like Him, will perfect holiness through the power of the Holy Ghost. It tells us that we enjoy

the promise of the Father; for the blessed Spirit has been sent down on us from the ascension of our Lord. "It is expedient for you that I should go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." This is the great gift which the ascension of our Lord has obtained for us, and the world has longed for and wanted. "Thou art gone up on high," says the psalmist in another psalm, "thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast given gifts unto men;" yea, even the gift of thyself in thine incorruptible Spirit.

And so, thirdly, this reminds us of the third event, the third ascension, to which these words of this psalm allude. The first was the removal of the ark up to the hill of Sion to its resting-place; the second is the ascension of our Lord on this day, in man's flesh, to God's right hand on high; but the third is the ascension of *us with* the Lord at His second coming, and return to heaven. This is the object of all His love and all His sufferings for us. It is to gather out of this earth an elect people, a holy multitude of redeemed souls, who through the blood of Christ and by the Spirit of the Lord are sanctified and prepared for God's kingdom in heaven. This is what most of all concerns and touches us. We shall *all* rise again, whether good or bad. They that are Christ's shall rise first, we are told; but ALL who are in their graves, good and bad alike, will hear the voice of the Son of man, and will come forth. We shall ALL awake from that

narrow bed of earth which each has occupied. There will be no escaping this. There will be no deep-dug grave which will not resound with that trumpet's note, and break open and let its occupant arise; yea, even those depths of the sea which man has never fathomed will restore the dead which they have received from year to year. But here the likeness altogether ceases. The redeemed will ascend; the lost will go down below. The redeemed people will surround the Lord of glory, and make Him the Lord of HOSTS at His next ascension; but the lost ones will depart to live with Satan and his angels in the pit of hell.

And well may we then ask in those words which precede my text, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall rise up to His holy place?" The answer is also there: "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; and hath not lift up his mind unto vanity. HE shall receive the blessing of the Lord, even righteousness from the God of his salvation." "He that hath not loved vanity;" *i.e.* hath overcome the world. "He that hath clean hands;" that is, hath overcome the flesh, with its affections and lusts. "He that hath a pure heart;" that is, hath overcome and cast out Satan, and kept his body the temple of the Holy Ghost.

These, my brethren, are the conditions for our ascension to glory. We shall all of us rise from our graves, whether we have this work of grace in us or not; but we shall *not ascend* unless Christ finds in us hands

clean from sin, a heart purified and dwelt in by the Holy Ghost, a spirit separated from the world and its sins and wickedness. Have we these? Do we think, on looking at ourselves, that we have them? Can we prove to ourselves that we are seeking for, and praying for, and trying for, and living for these things? They are the fruit of Christ's ascension this day, and of the coming of the Holy Ghost. Blessed indeed are we, if the proof of this is plain in us to God's all-seeing eye. Let us take good heed that God may indeed find the proofs in us of a true sanctification of heart and life. Let us take good heed that we are indeed numbered while in this life among the elect people of God; that we love God, and love to pray to Him, and love to be taught His holy word, and love His Church, and love our brethren who are in this world; that we love to do good, and to overcome our temptations, and to deny ourselves, and to live unto God. For love alone will fit us for our own ascension-day; love alone will fit us for heaven, where God is, and "God is Love."

SERMON XXXIII.

"O remember not the sins and offences of my youth; but according to thy mercy think thou upon me, O Lord, for thy goodness."

PSALM XXV. 6.

THIS psalm appears to have been composed by David in some time of trouble—perhaps, as has been supposed, during his flight from Jerusalem, when his own son Absalom rebelled against him, and the king fled before him. I can well remember one of the most excellent men of our own times,* telling me that, in a season of great trial and trouble to himself, he had found more help, and comfort, and consolation in this 25th Psalm than in any other. It has been difficult to me to select any verse in particular from it, as a text by itself; and I have chosen this one simply because we must all feel how necessary a prayer it contains for us all to use, whatever may be our age now, or our state of heart. We cannot, my brethren, I am sure, look back to our early life without seeing and feeling how much of all we are and do now is the result of habits formed,

* The late Rev. J. H. Pinder, canon of Wells.

of sins resisted, or of sins yielded to, in our earlier years. Childhood is in almost every case the parent of the full-grown man. We know how thoughtless children are apt to be, how little they look to consequences, how much they build upon the present moment, how few thoughts they ever bestow upon the future character and course of their life. They little think that from their tenderest years they are sowing the seeds which are to spring up and grow in years to come, and to bring forth good fruits for the great harvest, or only tares for the burning. But so it is surely with every one of us. What we are as children in the great outlines of our character, and temper, and habits of life, that we remain through all the long after years, when the faces which smiled upon our childhood have all passed away. It is this thought which invests with such supreme importance the earliest years and the first training which a child receives. No doubt the knowledge of this to His all-seeing eye was one reason why our Lord said to His disciples, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones." We might say, It is only a child; we need not care whether it receives Christian instruction and Christian training so young or not; a few years hence will do to think of such things for it; as yet let it run wild, and take its chance in the world. But if in the child we behold the future man, such a thought disappears at once. Is it not below the level of the ground that we dig out the foundation of

a building, and lay it strong and deep, knowing that if we were to begin to build upon the surface, our high walls would fall as soon as the first storm fell upon them? And so, too, in higher works than any which man accomplishes, in all the natural world around us, the same rule prevails—all will be well in the end if all is well done at the first, or at least if all is well in the end it is almost invariably because all was well done at first. Exactly so is it with each one of us. Our manhood is the reflection of what our childhood was in its leading characteristics, in almost every instance. I do not say but that it is in the *power* of all of us greatly to alter ourselves, as we grow on in years and knowledge, for better or worse; or rather I would say that we all *do* greatly alter from year to year, whether we know it or not; still, our original self underlies in most particulars all we still are. We may be cultivating in greater extent the gifts of grace and virtue which we at first possessed and were endowed with, or we may still be correcting the particular form of sins which beset us years ago: or we may be doing exactly the reverse of this, diminishing in grace and goodness, and yielding ourselves more completely to our besetting sin; still, in most of us the origin of both courses lay in us at our first, and in most cases we are but going on as we at first began. Well, then, if we look back to years which are gone beyond recall, when we feel now, as we did not then, the importance of our early habits of life, our

diligence or our neglect, our piety or our forgetfulness of God, our purity of heart and life, or our self-indulgence in unholy things, who is there amongst us who needs not and desires not to pray in the words of my text: "O remember not the sins and offences of my youth; but according to thy mercy think thou upon me, O Lord, for thy goodness"? If we have had any beginnings of goodness planted in us by the Holy Spirit of our God, surely we must all feel how far higher we might now be standing in God's sight, how far fitter for the life beyond the grave, if we had but loved, and served, and honoured Christ our Lord more than we did in our first years of life; or if, alas! our old sins still have their old power over us, if we are weak, and *they* are strong, how much of this result is surely to be traced to those first yieldings of ourselves to the first temptations we were conscious of.

And I think, my brethren, we must most of us be conscious of *this*, that though good and evil have grown up in us, as we ourselves have grown, noiselessly and imperceptibly, still they may be traced, if we look back carefully to some one or two occasions when, through God's grace, or our resistance to grace, we laid the first foundation of *that* good, or of *that* evil. And then we feel how much less good we have in us now by the blessed Spirit's work, from whom alone we have any good at all, than we might have had. And how much more evil still reigns and rules within us than might

have been the case had we but followed after holiness from the first with a more perfect heart, or with far more faith and constancy bade Satan leave us and begone. So here again we shall find our most suitable prayer of all to be, "O remember not the sins and offences of my youth; but according to thy mercy think thou upon me, O Lord, for thy goodness."

I think we may find here a word of exhortation for every class amongst us. Let the young amongst us know and learn that nothing can exceed the importance to them of forming habits of piety, faith, and obedience in their earliest years. It is God's perpetual promise to all ages, "They that seek me early shall find me." We see how God loved Abel, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Samuel, David, Daniel. But we should bear this in mind—they were all young men who feared the Lord from their youth; and while they had every reason to thank God for so helping them and leading them on as He did in each case, how much must their spirits rejoice, in the world where they now live, that they loved God as they did from their earliest days. Even in this world they reaped the fruits of their early piety; and now they reap them in the paradise of God: hereafter they will have them in the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

And all that they were, and far more than all they were, may any young persons amongst us be, who will give their hearts truly unto the Lord from the first.

Those saints of the Old Testament had no gift of the Holy Ghost to dwell in them as we have. In some way God helped them, and influenced them, and led them on; but the real gift of the Holy Ghost as a power of good in us was not given, we know, till our Lord Jesus Christ had ascended into heaven, and obtained this gift for His own people. And therefore let us remember this, that we have no excuse for our sins. It is not true with any one of us that we *cannot* resist our temptations when they come upon us; true it may be, alas! that we *do* not resist them; but it is simply because we do not put forth and use that power over our sins which God gives us, and which as it is used by us He gives us of it more and more. Satan has no power over us, if by the Spirit of our God we resist his assaults, and yield ourselves unto God. God, who dwelleth in us, is far greater than any power that is in the world; so that, as the apostle says, "if we resist the devil he will flee from us."

You see how necessary it is for us to know and believe that we indeed have received a spiritual gift of some kind from God in and by our baptism. In the not knowing or understanding this truth lies our chief weakness under temptation—our easy excuses even for the greatest sins and transgressions by which God is ever offended—and we lose our hopes of heaven. Let us thankfully and devoutly realize this certain fact that God has indeed made us His own children by

adoption and grace; that He has forgiven us all sin for Christ's sake, and has bestowed upon us the mighty power of His Holy Spirit to save us from the dominion of sin when it rises up against us and would subdue us.

So here, I say, in my text is a word for the young amongst us. The habits and ways you are now forming are the sure seeds of the harvest you will hereafter reap; and, as S. Paul says, "he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Again, to the old amongst us. When you, my friends, by your fireside or at your work abroad, look back to the outset of your life in this world, and think of all you have done and left undone—the good you have missed, or the evil you have knowingly submitted to—you, I am sure, will have to say to yourselves again and again, "O remember not the sins and offences of my youth; but according to thy mercy think thou upon me, O Lord, for thy goodness." You now see, which did not appear to you at first, that what you are now is but the sure and certain result of what you were and did in years long past away. You can see how the tree has grown and spread, branching out on one side of it, and stunted on the other; tapering up aloft on its slender stem, or nipped in its growth and beauty by an injury it received while it was yet tender and young.

This is a true picture of what you are. You are now, as it were, looking at yourself in a magnifying-glass; each feature and lineament is mainly the same now that it was at first, only now it is distended and enlarged. And so seeing the good you have missed, and the evil you have still surrounding you, you may in silent moments, and from the depth of your heart, cry out and say, "O remember not the sins and offences of my youth; but according to thy mercy think thou upon me, O Lord, for thy goodness."

And yet once more. A great proportion of us who are here to-day and every day are not the young or the very old, but we who are engaged in the active duties and work of our life in this world. And we too, as we may be both sowing and reaping at this moment—sowing the seeds of what we shall be, and reaping the harvest of what we have ever yet been and done—so at this period of life, which the young and the old may not have, there lies upon us the care and charge of others, of those who are to succeed to our place and name when, as it will so soon be, our life is past and over. If we have children of our own, or younger brothers or sisters who may be influenced by us, or if in any other way the little ones of Christ's fold come under our care, let us take heed that we try to influence them for good; that we try to set them a bright example of holiness and truthfulness in our own lives; that we direct their hearts into the love of God and the hatred of sin.

Surely the darkest sin of all in God's sight must be for any of us to do Satan's work in this world by leading others astray, so ruining both ourselves and them. Let us pray and watch against this. Let us teach, where we can, the great importance of habits of piety and truth to the youngest amongst us; teach, where we can, to the little ones around us this truth: "Keep innocency, and take heed unto the thing that is right: for that shall bring a man peace at the last." So doing, my brethren, above all other ways shall we best plead before Christ our Saviour the petition of my text: "O remember not the sins and offences of my youth; but according to thy mercy think thou upon me, O Lord, for thy goodness."